

## CHARITY IN A BALL DRESS.

BY HELEN LUQUEER.

SUCH an excitement had not been in Squashville for many a long day! A new minister had been installed, young, handsome, and, withal, unmarried!

There was not an unmated heart in the village that did not increase its palpitations even to a flutter. Every pretty head was completely turned by the possibility of the owner thereof becoming some day the Rev. Mrs. St. Clair. Even the old maids and widows of the congregation put on youthful manners and fresh ribbons, and the entire feminine portion of the congregation suddenly became pious. The prayer meetings were crowded by sanctimonious faces, and heads were bowed in devotion, while the rich tones of the new minister bore his charge up, on the wings of eloquence almost divine, to the throne of grace.

The first Sabbath of his ministerial duties the choir had arranged to sing an anthem at the opening of the service. Of course there had been the usual quantity of growling over it, but finally it was practised to perfection. And as the tall and commanding figure of the minister passed up the church aisle, there broke upon his ears a voice as clear and pure as the murmuring waters of a woodland brook. It was a soprano whose liquid notes thrilled him exquisitely. And when the rest of the choir took up the refrain, this voice soared like a bird in midair above all others, distinct in its individuality and superb melody. Over the bowed head and through the devout heart of St. Clair floated and penetrated the gush of heaven-born song. Involuntarily he raised his eyes up to the triumphant choir for the owner of that sweet voice. One fairer than all the rest, with eyes blue as the heavens and full of liquid light, hair like a web of sunlight sweeping back from a pure intellectual face, marked by strength of character, yet earnestly tender, riveted his gaze. All this he saw in one swift and comprehensive glance, and that the beautiful woman was the head of the village choir.

Every word uttered by the young minister was as so many pearls to the gaping

half-fed people. "How logical and original!" said the old heads, with congratulatory voices; while the younger ones exclaimed, "How splendid! What lovely eyes and hair, and such a commanding presence!"

The church awoke from its lethargy, and life and action entered its portals. Such tea-gatherings, socials and mite societies had not made Squashville notable within the memory of its oldest inhabitants. Not a cloud obscured the brightness of the sky of the young divine. Everything within the church and without went merry as marriage-bells. Green pastures and clear waters were all about him, through which he confidently thought to lead the entire populace of the village to heaven.

He was possessed of talents, and eloquence, and a magnetic temperament, which seemed to govern and carry all with whom he associated in the direction he chose. But as a natural result, his egotism grew like a mushroom in so congenial a soil.

Yet presently a tiny cloud appeared in the horizon of Squashville, arousing the antagonism of the new minister. He would preach it down at once—crush it in the bud—and hastened to do so. One prayer meeting night but a few of the younger people were present. He missed the fairest face of the flock, and the sweet voice of the rare songstress of the choir, Bella Harrison. Rumor whispered that the young people had instituted a series of hops, and that she was among the number who attended. It was absolute profanation!

The next Sabbath Bella stood in her place, looking so saintlike and calm, that but for positive proof St. Clair possessed of her actual presence where they tripped the "light fantastic toe," he would not have believed the assertion. How devotional she looked—how almost sadly divine—as she sang, "O had I the wings of a dove." He fancied he detected a look of meek contrition in her face. And now was the time to use caustic and knife.

Now the moment to apply the bitter remedies of the stern physician and create a cure.

When he arose fire was in his eyes, burned upon his cheeks, and tipped his tongue. Gracious! how the opposers of dancing and other kindred amusements did gloat over and fatten upon that sermon! As the new minister warmed with his subject he forgot the sanctity of the house, and gave way to temper a thousand-fold more sinful than dancing. When he spoke of it as "the hellish device of Satan—a damnable pastime," little did he think how the pure soul of more than one woman shrank from his profanity. It was terrible to Bella Harrison, disgusting, rude and personal.

At a single stroke he lost the confidence and esteem of the great majority of the young people of Squashville, aroused their antagonism, and war was declared. Winter was before them, stupid and dreary enough under the best circumstances, but now they would be more than ever gay, and show Mr. St. Clair that dance they would, and how lightly they regarded his opinion—how much it was behind the time, and unworthy of a liberal age.

All the stiff-jointed old maids whose dancing days were over held up their hands in holy horror at the mere mention of the hops and parties inaugurated after the sermon, and gathered about him, a withered phalanx of piety and propriety. They were backed by the saints and "elect" of both sexes who could rob the poor, oppress the widow and orphan, and, like whited sepulchres, stand up and oppose all lightness and vanity, unmindful of what was within themselves, of the heart black, deceitful and desperately wicked.

Sustained by this class, and spurred on to renewed warfare by deceit, St. Clair poured forth again and again the fiery thunders of his eloquence and invective upon the young sinners' heads, until half of the congregation filled other churches, and youth and maidens openly whispered and smiled their comments in his very face. Gone was the devotional feeling of the church. The leader had turned it into a theatre of sensational lectures or sermons. The sweet voice of Bella Harrison alone sanctified the place, and gave the hearers a glimpse of the peace of angels and har-

mony of heaven. Even Mr. St. Clair took into his troubled conscience and heart a little of the heaven of kindness and charity with her tones.

During a visit one day he met the fair songstress at the door of a poor widow. She was just leaving the humble and miserable abode, and upon entering, St. Clair found the penury-stricken woman weeping tears of gratitude over a bundle of warm flannels Bella had left. And in glowing terms did the poor old creature describe the goodness and generosity of the dear young lady.

"It is the salt ov the earth she is, sirr. May the blessid saints an' howly angels kape her from all throuble and harum. Shure the roomatix 'ill not be afther rack-in' and scourghin' me ould bones wid all this flannin any more. Look till it now, will your riverence? There's a pound ov the best tay yees could-mate wid in a dhay's travil. Why, she's jest the most charitable augil in the world. And there is mittens for me ould man. And she knitted them wid her own pretty white fingers, Heaven bless her!"

After giving the old woman some consolation in her poverty and trouble, St. Clair departed with a tender appreciation of Bella Harrison, and more than ever determined to bring her to a realizing sense of the enormity of dancing. If she could be convinced (being the acknowledged belle and leader, as well as the most intellectual and influential), others would be certain to follow, and the good work fairly commenced. That very night he would call upon her and earnestly endeavor to convince her of the error of her ways. If the task should prove difficult, it would at least be a sweet one, and he would have done his duty.

A few hours later he was ushered into the cheerfully-lighted parlor of Judge Harrison, where he found waiting one of the village beaux, in very elaborate attire, even to light kids. Presently a rustling upon the stairs proclaimed the coming of Bella, and St. Clair almost drew his breath with a gasp as she stood bowing and smiling upon them, radiant in a ball dress of turquoise silk, with an overskirt of soft white fleecy muslin, ruffled and puffed, the snowy neck and rounded arms half concealed and half disclosed by its folds. Her white and slender wrists were banded

with rare jewels and gold. In the meshes of her hair, and upon her bosom, nestled rosebuds, and in the heart of each sparkled a tiny diamond, like a drop of dew.

She gave her reverend friend one small white-gloved hand, and expressed her regrets that an engagement deprived her of the pleasure of his visit. Would he be kind enough to excuse her, and call at another time? She went away with the gentleman he had found waiting for her, leaving him to a proxy visit with her parents.

And this, he thought, in the seclusion of his own room, is the charitable young creature old Mrs. McGuire called the blessing of Heaven down upon with the most genuine tears of gratitude? Charity in a ball dress! The very fitness of things forbade it. Had she not always walked in the garb of a nun, plain-robed, sad-colored and meek-eyed? What wonder that his dreams that night were filled with visions of the peerless Bella, dispensing bounty to the Squashville poor, and that he awoke disgusted with himself for such vagaries of Morpheus?

At a concert a few nights later, fate or St. Clair's evil genius, seated him just behind Miss Harrison and a lady friend. It is proper, you know, for preachers to attend such gatherings, even if the most silly of songs or negro melodies are rendered, or juggling sleight-of-hand, or any other humbug, or if indecent characters strutted upon the boards, so long as it was not called "theatre" or "dance." Ah! that a rose by any other name should smell as sweet!

It so chanced that every word of an animated conversation, during the waiting for the commencement of the music was wafted to the somewhat willing ears of the young minister.

"I dread next Sabbath's sermon, Bella. Wont we catch it again for dancing at Mrs. Dayton's party? But we had a splendid time."

"Yes; dancing, even if it is such a sin, does a mission work for me," laughed Bella. "It relieves such parties of the insufferable stupidity. I detest sitting still and talking with people who have not a dozen ideas, to be picked to pieces by envious gossips, or stared at and followed about by languishing admirers, diinning into one's ears their soft nothings."

"Mr. St. Clair and his church think we

ought to enjoy playing 'authors,' music, conversation, and silly childish plays. I verily believe they would prefer horrible 'kissing' parties to a dance. Who ever heard a sermon against a 'bussing bee'? Why, they are common at the majority of donations in Pennsylvania."

"There is no accounting for tastes," replied Bella, shrugging her shoulders with infinite disgust. "But I must say that Mr. St. Clair excites my most profound commiseration. If he would only subdue his pride and temper, and drop the subject of dancing, for a time at least, the religious and moral tone of the church would improve."

"I presume he is conscientious, and thinks he is doing his highest duty."

"Undoubtedly. But if he would only preach against greed, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness—against backbiting, lying tongues and the follies of youth, we might be benefited."

St. Clair did not remain until the performance was concluded. He stole out with very much the feeling and fate of an ordinary listener. Daily he had been growing into a state of disquietude, and his thoughts dwelt upon the beautiful soprano who would defy his advice and precepts, and dance when she chose so to do.

One day both his pen and brain refused the bidding of his will, and he went out to pay his customary visits to the poor. The little dirty ill-smelling places required all his grace to endure, especially as he was out of sorts with himself and the world. Nothing but a long breezy ramble over the frosty hills would extract the bad odors from his nostrils and take the fever and excitement from out his blood.

Returning from his long walk at the close of the day, just before him upon the brow of a hill that overlooked the village, he saw outlined against the sky the tall lithe form of the woman whom of all others he was trying to forget.

She turned as he drew near, with the exquisite color of health tinting her cheeks and sparkling in her eyes. After the first words of greeting, she said:

"I've had a glorious climb, Mr. St. Clair, to get a most glorious view." And she pointed down the valley, within whose heart was locked a frozen stream; and away off, over undulating hills, evergreen-crowned, and patched with snow, through

which brown rocks thrust themselves, the setting sun flamed through the gateways of the clouds, tinting the sky with a summer glory and warmth, flooding the barren and dreary landscape, and streaming down as a benediction from the tops of the highest hills.

"It is indeed glorious, and worth the effort, and I am glad to be permitted to share it with you, Miss Harrison," he replied.

She drew a breath of positive enjoyment as they watched the rapidly changing scene, which, like some beautiful dream, vanished almost as soon as it was born, leaving nothing but a faint golden light upon the western sky to tell of the glory that had been.

"To my mind," said St. Clair, "that changeful sky is typical of pleasures that are as fleeting, and leave behind only gloom and disappointment; even as Dead Sea fruit, beautiful to look upon, but turning to ashes upon the lips."

"And to me," responded Bella, "it speaks of the coming summer and resurrection of nature."

"True. It is indeed the symbol not only of the resurrection of inanimate nature, but of life everlasting. Miss Bella, I am delighted to meet you here surrounded by nothing conventional, but only God and his wonderful works. I wish to speak to you as your pastor and friend about the frivolity and sin of vain amusements—of dancing, and of your influence and accountability, and I hope that I shall be forgiven if I speak plainly."

"Certainly, Mr. St. Clair. But do you not think you have already exhausted the subject in the pulpit? I am sure you cannot complain of my being inattentive there."

She was almost offended, and in the quick coming breath and the increased color it expressed itself, though her tones were submissive enough. St. Clair bit his lip as he glanced down upon the splendid creature by his side, so vigorous and buoyant of nature, and with the grand inheritance of perfect health. He noticed the firm set of the red lips over the white even teeth, and the expression of defiance flashing out of the wonderfully expressive eyes. Then he cleared his throat, opened his mouth, and said something very wide of the mark. And Bella, with the magnanimity of her

nature, brought him back at once to the subject in question.

"I know, Mr. St. Clair, I may be wrong, and perhaps to me the simple pleasure of dancing may not be antagonistic to a Christian life. Yet I grant it is vanity, as indeed must be all youthful pleasures. But our natures are childlike and frivolous. We have not as yet taken up the burden and the cross of life. There is time enough to settle down. But since the magnetism of youth draws us together, why complain because we select the most innocent of pastimes?"

"Does it appear innocent to you, Miss Bella—can you not see that it leads to excitement and dissipation? Are not young men led to drink as a stimulant to their taxed energy, and are not the constitutions of young ladies often seriously injured by the excesses of a heated room? And are not reputations jeopardized by the promiscuous intermingling of society?"

"These social meetings lead to late hours, I grant, and there ought to be many reforms. Dancing should be confined to one's particular set, and if our teachers would only set themselves to regulating these things by advocating more moderation—in short, if they would pluck from it all evil tendencies, it would become only, what it really is, a healthful practice, and as devoid of immorality and dissipation as skating or any other amusement."

In reply St. Clair spoke at length of its opposing influence to the gospel, and serious hinderance to the church.

"That is only because you opposers make it so," she replied. "As I said before, if you would teach us temperance in this, like most forbidden pleasures, it might lose something of its charm."

The shadows of the chill February evening had long since swept up the valley, and darkened and shut out the prospect, and St. Clair turned with a sigh to accompany the obdurate young lady down the rugged path to the village.

"You must forgive me," she said, melting at his silence. "I fear I am a little spoiled. I have always been allowed to think for myself. Yet if you can convince me of my error I shall yield the point as gracefully as possible. At least, Mr. St. Clair, let us be friends. I will try to use my poor influence to modify and purify our dancing parties."

She gave him her hand at her own door with an appealing gesture and look that conquered the already besieged heart of the divine, and the clasp he gave her, and the low spoken good-night, conveyed more than a pastoral benediction.

"Friends?" were they not more than that now? Had not this fair young lady showed him how weak and sinful was his best endeavor? In place of preaching to her, had she not rather preached to him and gained the day in more senses than one? In short, had she not won his first and deepest affections, next to his God? Struggle as he might, there was no escape out of the dilemma. He could not marry "a dancer," one of the most gay and influential of her set in the village. And yet he had no hope of convincing her of the error of her ways. Her mind was too logical and firm to easily yield a disputed point. It was, therefore, only left for him to seek forgetfulness in another field. To remain there now was madness. Bella Harrison had the voice and power to sing him to destruction, if she willed so to do. He drew up a request for his dismissal, and proposed handing it in at an early day.

When again he met Bella on a mission of charity, the poor fluttering moth proposed a walk to the hilltop from whence they had enjoyed the rare sunset. The conversation drifted to the needy and suffering, and then to themselves.

"When I am gone, Miss Bella," he said, "I shall often recall this spot and the delightful walks with you."

"Gone, Mr. St. Clair?" And her face flushed and then grew pale.

"Yes, Miss Bella. You have destroyed my influence here—and my peace of mind, I fear, forever. It only remains for me to seek new duties and forgetfulness, if I can."

"Your influence? your peace, Mr. St. Clair?" faltered Bella. "What do you mean? What can I have done?"

"This—just this. You have taught me to love you dearly, and madly, and—and—"

"And I am not fit to hold such a power

over your heart? I understand?" she replied, in a low and quivering voice.

"No, not that, as Heaven is my judge, my dear girl. You are all that a noble woman could be, lovely, and unselfish, charitable, but alas!"

"I will dance!"

The comical side of the wooing presented itself to the quick-witted girl, and she could not but smile through her tears.

"I fear I shall not be understood," he replied, as he grasped her hands, wholly disconcerted. "I had not thought to speak at all, but Providence seems to have ordained the meeting just to humiliate me and show you my weakness. But whatever happens you must know that I love you very dearly. Yet I am not wholly a free agent. I belong to a sacred calling and cause, and to espouse one ever so dear or worthy holding views antagonistic to the welfare of the church would very much if not entirely do away with my usefulness."

"Have you so mean an opinion of me, Mr. St. Clair? Do you think that I, as the wife of a minister, would do anything to retard his advancement or usefulness, or that I would fritter away in vain amusements time which should be big with self-improvement and duty?—that for the man I loved I would not make any reasonable sacrifice?"

He was distressed beyond measure as Bella uttered her angry protest, and drawing her hand from his, turned away and began ruthlessly to demolish the bright green fringe of a low-bending hemlock.

But it is enough to know that with the eloquence born of love St. Clair so pressed his suit that half an hour later two happy young creatures passed slowly down the hill path amid the gathering gloom, walking as on air and feeling as on moonbeams!

They are married now. The dancing days of Bella are over, but not her influence. To the young people she preaches moderation—to her husband the charity which is kind; and peace and prosperity reign in the village, as they should and will everywhere if people will be less bigoted and more lenient.

## MISS ANDERSON'S RIGHT HAND.

BY AMETHYST WAYNE.

### CHAPTER IV.

MR. ATHERTON enjoyed the great glory of his dinner party, and went to and fro along the streets in high jubilation thereafter. Miss Anderson, in her superb coach with its three snowy horses, swept up to his door, and he had the supreme felicity of rushing out, in the sight of all the envious neighbors, and assisting her to alight.

Miss Anderson, stately but gracious in black satin, point lace and ruby ornaments, sat at his right hand at the table, and beside her, with Amy between him and Mrs. Worth, the minister's wife, sat Ray Dexter. The minister, the lawyer, and the president of the bank, and one or two other magnates of the town were present. Everything passed off smoothly, and the ambitious and nervous host was thrilled to his very finger tips with triumphant satisfaction. Ray Dexter, the lion of the youthful portion of the community, a smart-feeling, good-looking fellow, by no means oblivious of his own merits, divided his attentions pretty equally between the great lady and the pretty daughter of the host. Amy Atherton was unusually lovely in the new barege, whose pale pink set off charmingly her delicate wild-rose complexion and soft dark eyes. There was a timid deprecating air about her, too, which was new and very charming in the eyes of Ray Dexter. He noticed it especially when his adopted father, Lawyer Dexter, while he cracked a walnut, leaned across to the bank president and remarked:

"I say, Mansfield, that hermit murder is a great mystery. I am afraid it isn't to be cleared up."

"It doesn't look likely now, I admit. Still evidence may turn up unexpectedly."

"It was a horrible thing. No efforts should be spared to bring the wicked murderer to light," chimed in the minister, indignantly.

"The mystery of the whole affair is remarkable," concluded Lawyer Dexter. "To think we know nothing about the man's antecedents. I hoped our advertisement might

bring some one forward who could tell us about him."

"How long has he been in the town? I don't remember when I first heard of him," broke in the clear even tones of Miss Anderson.

"It must be nearly a year. I always felt sure there was some stirring history connected with him. He had refined gentlemanly ways despite his rude life. But he was very shy of any intercourse with strangers. Poor fellow! it would have been better for him to have taken lodgings at the hotel."

"There was a woman at the bottom of it, as at the root of all mischief," says the lawyer.

"So Bradley thinks. That piece of black silk holds a terrible secret."

Amy Atherton lifted her coffee-cup, and drank slowly and lingeringly, but there was a nervous flutter perceptible at the white throat. She saw Ray Dexter's eye upon her, and flushed, then paled.

"It troubles me so," faltered she, in a very low tone. "I wish people would not talk so much about it, but would let me forget it. I hardly dare venture out of doors even in broad daylight. I shall make a hermit of myself if this continues."

The drooping eyes seemed almost ready to drop their pearly tears, the sweet lips quivered like those of a grieved child. The young man was thoroughly charmed.

"Sweet trembler," whispered he, "let me come and take you out and scatter all your terrors. Who could harm an angel like you?"

Amy rallied her self-possession, and flashed a brightened glance in his face. But here her attention was drawn again to the general conversation.

"I've been waiting for some of you ladies to take up the gage flung down to us by our worthy legal friend," began Miss Anderson's clear ringing voice. "A woman at the bottom of all mischief, indeed! We get such credit, I admit, but how rarely stands the case? Look through your criminal lists,

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most acute lawyer, and tell me how many men you find convicted, for one woman proved guilty? Then consider how women are put down, wronged, robbed, outraged, trampled upon, how few and feeble are their means of self-support, of redress for injury, and marvel at their forbearance and virtue, as I do."

There was passion in the voice, though the face was cool and calm. Lawyer Dexter looked a trifle discomposed, but the gallant host hastened to the rescue.

"Ah, Miss Anderson, you have us there! It were idle to attempt to argue the point. Angelic womanhood deserves only admiration, tenderness and knightly devotion."

He bowed, as he spoke, to the right and left, and flattered himself that he had made a very telling speech. Amy bit her lip, glanced over to the worn faded face of her mother, and inwardly commented:

"You'd better practise a little more before you preach."

"By the way, I received a letter to-day," said the president of the bank, "from a stranger who, it seems, saw my name on the bank notes. He is a taxidermist, and is preparing a set of birds for some museum, and wanted to know if there was any sort of a cottage, or *hovel*, even, which he could obtain near our lake, as he is told a certain class of birds are familiar there. I wrote back at once about the hermit's hut, and told him frankly its melancholy story. I wait the result with curiosity."

"He should be possessed of strong nerves," observed Miss Anderson, with a shrug of her shoulders.

"What would tempt you to try it, Miss Amy?" asked Ray Dexter, mischievously.

Amy turned pale at the very thought, and looked so distressed that even Miss Anderson wondered, and said, quietly:

"And now I think we might select a more enlivening subject. Amy dear, you are quite a stranger at Lakeville; do you mean to forsake me entirely?"

"I hope not," interposed Ray Dexter, with that air of ready assurance which in any one else would have seemed impertinence and conceit. "I am going to escort her thither the first fine afternoon after your new plant is in blossom. She doesn't like to walk alone."

Amy flushed, and her downcast lids veiled the defiant light in her eyes.

"Of course she will be very much grati-

fied," answered Mr. Atherton for her; and so Amy only bit her lip, and made an impatient movement which her mother took for a signal to rise from the table, and hastily set the example.

Miss Anderson was the first to leave, and Ray Dexter readily accepted her invitation to take the seat beside her in the luxurious open barouche. He took very impressive leave of Amy, however, and went away in high spirits. The other guests soon followed the example of the leader of the Cranstown aristocracy, and the Athertons were left alone.

The master, however, was in a state of exhilaration and superb self-satisfaction which would not allow him to settle down quietly, and presently he put on his hat and sauntered down the street.

Mrs. Atherton ran up stairs to remove her new dress, and descended into the disordered dining-room in full trim for occupation till midnight. Amy was gathering up the silver, and setting the glasses by themselves. 'There was a wistful weary look on her face that touched her mother.

"You're tired all out, Amy. Go right to bed. Nancy and I can tend to all these. You helped me so much in getting ready. I don't want you to help me at all."

"I couldn't sleep if I went to bed," answered Amy, sighing. "I'd rather help than not."

"But your dress, dear child; put on an apron, do. Where's your black silk? I couldn't find it yesterday. I wanted to put it on over my old gingham to make me look a little respectable when I saw Mrs. Jackson coming up the walk. You hadn't it on, I know, but I searched every place I could think of."

"No matter," said Amy, hurriedly; "one of your calico ones will answer."

"But you know where the silk apron is, don't you?"

"I suppose so. What shall I do with this jelly?"

"Why, Mrs. Atherton," exclaimed Nancy, who had been listening with gaping eyes and mouth, "I found a piece of black silk binding in the stove when I made the fire one morning. It had a button on it just like Amy's black silk apron, I do declare."

"Dear me! what if it's burnt up? I shouldn't think it could be, if it hadn't puzzled me so. But how could it get there?" said Mrs. Atherton, in a perplexed voice.

Amy had made precipitate retreat into the closet with the jelly. She set the dish down, and clasped both hands over her burning face.

"O dear! O dear! why didn't I stay and make sure every bit of it was burnt up? What if Nancy should tell of that anywhere? And if I say a word about it they'll be sure to suspect me. O, if I had known how hard it was going to be, not even that great temptation could have moved me. O, if I could only see Charlie Creyton to-night!"

The wish grew into an intense desire, then a morbid necessity.

"He works evenings in the shop very often. There's no harm in going down to see if there's a light there; I could make an excuse about mother's bookshelf if any of the workmen were there."

She slipped on her shawl and hat, and glided out noiselessly, speeding along as if pursued by an invisible foe. Her heart gave a great bound of relief as she came in sight of the shop and beheld the warm glow lighting up the windows. She examined cautiously from the outside before she ventured in. There was Charlie Creyton, all unconscious of scrutiny, bending over his workbench filing off the corners of a hinge. She heard his clear mellow whistle ringing out merrily, and a soft dew crept into the eyes that watched the frank manly face bent so intently over his work.

"It isn't troubling him so much," thought Amy, and took courage herself.

In another moment she was in the shop standing beside him. He heard the light step, and looked up carelessly, but a glad tender glow broke over his face as he recognized his visitor.

"Why, Amy Atherton, you came in like a fairy!"

"Let's go into the other room; I don't want to be seen from these windows," faltered Amy, keeping her back to the street.

Charlie took up the lamp and led the way into a small room, a sort of office, in which he kept his desk and order-book. He closed the door, and set down the lamp, and then looked anxiously and lovingly into the sweet agitated face.

"O Charlie!" gasped Amy, a flood of tears overrunning her cheek, and relieving the dry hard throbbing in her throat, "I find it so hard!"

Charlie Creyton did something which would have drawn upon him the bitter an-

ger of three very important personages in Cranstown—Miss Anderson, Ray Dexter, and last, but by no means least, Mr. Graham Atherton. He just stepped forward and took the slender trembling girl into his strong young arms and kissed her fondly, not once, or twice, and for all the world with the air of a man who has the indisputable right.

"Why, Amy, my darling little Amy! you look as if you had suffered tortures. What can I say to comfort you?"

Amy brightened, as if she had somehow received a little consolation already.

"O Charlie, I got so nervous and excited I couldn't help coming! It seemed to me as if I was never to get a chance to see you again."

"Dear little Amy! I've had two or three glimpses of you flitting to and fro, and they have brightened me up amazingly."

"You seem so cheerful and contented, Charlie. I don't understand it."

"Why not, dear Amy?"

"Because—because—" and her eyes deepened to blackness and cheeks paled—"I would give all the world to take back that night. I can't forget it—it was so horrible!"

"Yes, Amy, it was horrible," he answered, gently. "I would not dwell upon the thought if I were you."

"But I am afraid—O, so dreadfully afraid, Charlie, that we shall be found out, and then what will become of us?"

"There is no danger, dear one; none at all."

"But I haven't told you all. You have heard, haven't you, about the piece of black silk Mr. Bradley is keeping for a clue by which to detect the murderer?"

"Yes, I have, and I have puzzled about it."

"Charlie Creyton, it came from my apron."

His face was grave in a moment.

"You kept it out of sight, Amy? I hope no one has seen it."

"I burnt it up, but Nancy found a little piece of it and told mother, and she don't know what to make of it. And O dear! I don't know how to act. I never thought before, Charlie, what a terrible, terrible thing it is to be compelled to act a lie."

"My sensitive darling!" says Charlie Creyton, tenderly, smoothing the brown hair, and fondling the trembling fingers, "it is hard on you. But I don't think you

need to be so much alarmed. There is no real absolute danger."

"I try to think so, but then I think what if they find out about the apron, and discover the pistol with you, and if somebody saw us go together to the lake, and if he shouldn't come to help us—O Charlie, couldn't they prove it against us?"

"Have you been tormenting yourself with all these horrible fancies, Amy? I do not wonder that you are so unnerved to-night. Trust me, my darling, when I tell you there is no danger."

"Have you spent any of that gold, Charlie? I never thought what I was doing, but gave mine to mother, and she has passed one or two pieces at the store already. It has frightened me so, but I dare not tell her to keep the rest. Don't you see, Charlie, what a terrible web of evidence it might be made?"

She looked up into his face with wistful eagerness. There was a grave look on his face, but still he smiled bravely.

"Yes, Amy, it might be made to wear an ugly look. But people do not know what we can tell. There is not the slightest suspicion afloat."

"And don't you repent?" asked she, shivering; "don't you wish we had done differently—that we had not been tempted by that golden hope, which seems only a miserable tangle now?"

"No, Amy, I do not; my faith is in no ways shaken. Try to be courageous and cheerful, and not yield to your fears. I am very sorry that you were in it. I wish I could be near you to keep up your spirits."

"O, I wish you could!" sighed Amy.

"And now tell me about the gay doings at your house. I saw Miss Anderson's carriage roll by, and perceived that Ray Dexter was the lion of the day. Little Amy! how proud I was to remember, while he flung his contemptuous glances, that the priceless treasure he coveted belonged to me—my Amy's love."

"It is not the love he cares for," replied Amy, "it is the prospective fortune. I think myself he had better marry Miss Anderson. She is gracious enough to him to warrant the hope. Why, she watches every movement and look. I shouldn't wonder if she were in love with him. O dear! I wish she would marry him, and that would be the end of it. O Charlie, I am a terrible coward when I think of my father's anger."

"And so am I, Amy, but only because I have so little to offer you. And then, I think, it is not little, after all, such a true devoted love, such a tender shielding arm as I shall give you. And as for the fortune, I have no prospects, to be sure, but I shall never see you a worn weary toiler. I am earning a comfortable income now, and my business is increasing. After all, Amy, I honestly believe I shall do better for you, and make you a happier woman than Ray Dexter is able. If I did not feel so sure of it, I would cut off my right hand before I would step between you and him. I only wish, as you say, Miss Anderson would marry. I don't care whom she selects; anything to take away the prospect of that fortune for you, so your father cannot accuse me of fortune-hunting, as I know he will."

"No matter for his accusations," answered Amy, with renewed spirit. "If only this haunting horror is cleared away, I shall have courage for all the rest. O it was torture to be obliged to sit at the table to-day and hear them talk about it. And they kept up the theme till even Miss Anderson was tired of it. And when they spoke about that shred of silk, it seemed to me I must scream out in very agony of terror."

"Don't talk any more about it, dear Amy. Try to steady your nerves and put all thought of it away. I tell you, my darling, there shall no harm come to you."

"Dear Charlie, I am so glad I came; I am so much happier already."

"And I am very thankful too, Amy. O, this makes me impatient for the time when I can stand up before all the world to save and shield you. If I might only speak to your father now—"

"Not yet," cried Amy, shrinking at the thought. "I mean to be the one to tell him myself."

"Perhaps that is better. At all events, I will wait to test the mysterious hope held out to me."

"And now I must go back. If they should suspect I came here—"

"Promise not to be frightened or anxious, and I will let you go."

"I will try my best; indeed I will, Charlie."

"Good-night, then, my darling."

"Good-night, Charlie."

## CHAPTER V.

At the same time that the dim, dusty lumberland cabinet-shop witnessed the earnest conference of the young lovers, Miss Anderson's pet parlor made a rich framework for a tableau of a different sort. It was an octagon room, and furnished with a richness of taste which might have served Cleopatra. Dark purple hangings, looped from alabaster pillars, twined by a vine in dead gold. The carpet, on which the foot left no sound, one rich dark web of purple velvet, with a border of gold in the Greek pattern. The divans—there were but two chairs in the room—were of sumptuous yellow satin, with gold and purple trimmings. A chandelier, aglitter with amber and amethystine drops, shed a soft radiance over the few costly gems of art; a superb landscape, an Italian scene, with all the gold and crimson glories of their wondrous sunsets blazing down on a vineyard in the distance, and a dimpling glimpse of the blue Mediterranean, with a white sail flitting through the purple mists. A statue of Zenobia, and one or two groups from mythological subjects. These were all, except the flowers which hung their odorous breath over costly vases, blossomed richly from gilded baskets, and trailed their bright petals along the windows.

Seated on the central divan was the mistress of the house. She had left him a moment admiring a new picture, and had laid aside her dinner dress. She knew it would not harmonize with the parlor into which she admitted but a privileged few. The stately drawing-room was for the outside world. Only those upon whom she desired to make a profound impression were admitted into this her charmed circle. There she was now, her fine form set off by a gold-colored silk, with waves of frothy lace rippling here and there. The rubies were gone, and amethysts and diamonds were in their place. A gold arrow, gem-studded, glistened in her hair, bracelets on her wrists. She meant to dawn upon him royally, and she succeeded. The young man passed his hand across his eyes, as if to shield them from being dazzled. Miss Anderson smiled, a soft glow overspread her cheeks, her eyes shone with an unwonted tender light. She looked at least ten years younger than at the dinner-party. She motioned Ray Dexter to the seat beside her.

"And now," said she, "for a little rest, after that tiresome dinner-party. Poor Mr.

Atherton was in such a flutter of delight it was almost ludicrous. What a contrast is dear little Amy to them both."

"She is indeed; a sweet flower among brambles," answered Ray, sinking upon the luxurious divan, and glancing about him with a delicious dreamy consciousness of his fitness for and enjoyment of such rich surroundings. "My dear Miss Anderson, what superb taste you have shown in getting up this room. I fancy I am in an eastern palace, and that you are Zenobia or Cleopatra."

Miss Anderson smiled upon him. There was a passionate tenderness, a hungry longing in the half-veiled eye, which startled the youth, already vain and arrogant.

"By George!" exclaimed he, inwardly, "what's the use in waiting for Amy? I verily believe I might win Miss Anderson herself. She looks superbly to-night!"

"You are silent and dreamy, Ray. Tell me your thoughts. I hope you need no assurance of my interest and friendship."

"Thank you, I am very much honored by it. You have indeed been always a kind friend. I scarcely can analyze my thoughts; your beautiful room and you yourself have made me half suspect I am in a fairy dream. I never saw you look so magnificent, Miss Anderson."

She smiled proudly, and then sighed.

"You must save your compliments for sweet little Amy. The girl is shy with me, as she must not be who is some day to be your wife, Ray."

"Nay," said Ray, stealing a covert glance into her face, "perhaps it will never be. Stranger things have happened."

"Ah, but this must be. Surely, Ray, you have not quarrelled?"

"O no, not at all, but—but—"

"There is no other?" exclaimed Miss Anderson, with a swift look of alarm sweeping across her face. "Ray, Ray, you have not been so rash?"

Ray looked a trifle discomposed. With lowered eyelids he answered, slowly:

"I will be advised by you, Miss Anderson. Next to yourself there is no one I care so much for as for Amy."

She was lost in deep thought, and scarcely heeded the import of his speech.

"I am glad to have this opportunity for a long talk; I have been wishing for it for some time, Ray. You know how keenly I am interested in you; how much I have

always cared for you. I wish you would speak freely and tell me your plans."

"My plans?" echoed Ray, in some surprise.

"For a settlement in the world, you know. Your studies are all ended, as far as teachers can help you. What have you decided upon, a profession?"

"To tell the truth," replied Ray, a little nettled at the cool business tone, "I have not yet considered the matter."

"But you surely have some wish. Which way lies your taste?" she said, eagerly, "to what profession?"

The indolent coxcomb shrugged his graceful shoulders.

"I haven't much fancy for either, or any. It's a great mistake I wasn't born rich."

There went a flash across her eyes, and she spoke quickly:

"But you will be rich sometime, Ray."

"Thank you for the prophecy. If it comes I shall enjoy it—say for instance a parlor like this, and a mistress of the house as beautiful and royally attired as you. I think I was born with a keener enjoyment of such things than most people. My parents must have been fastidious and luxurious people."

She caught her breath a little nervously.

"But I wish you would try and think. It is a man's place to select some work and aim. Women must wait and meekly accept what comes to hand, but a man can choose and carve his own destiny. I want to help you in the matter. How do you fancy following in Mr. Dexter's steps? He spoke of it the other day, that there was room for you in his office."

"That dry, musty intolerable law!" ejaculated Ray.

"Medicine, then? there are many great and honored physicians," urged she, in a wonderfully meek and patient voice.

"To be running around at the beck and call of every snuffy old woman and dirty youngster! Horrible!"

"But you will not like the pulpit?"

Ray's laugh rang out musical and clear.

"Just fancy it, Miss Anderson. Can you transform me into a meek-faced, solemn-visaged minister in a white neckcloth and black surplice?"

Miss Anderson's sigh floated off in his laugh, while she said, coaxingly:

"But what *will* it be, Ray?"

"Sure enough," said the young man, lugub-

rously, "what will become of me, loving my ease and all dear luxuries so well, if that annuity fails, as it may any day, I suppose. If you would only marry me yourself, Miss Anderson," he said, with sudden audacity, fixing his bright dark eyes on her face.

She tried to bear it unflinchingly, but there was a little gasp in the breath, a stern clenching of the lip, a quiver of the eyelid, ere she returned, calmly:

"You are insane, Ray. Do you know how old I am?"

"I know that you are superb to-night—that you always exert a subtle fascination over me—that you are incomparably beyond the young ladies I meet."

Miss Anderson's two white shapely hands were locked across her heart. She scarcely lifted her eyelids at all, while she replied:

"You shall have my fortune, Ray and marry Amy Atherton, and I will always remain your true and faithful friend."

"You are too generous," exclaimed Ray, even his selfish heart touched by a white pallor on her face, suggestive of stifled anguish.

"Have you spoken to Amy plainly?" asked the lady, presently.

"I don't think I have. But it is well understood. I think there is no question about her sentiments."

And Ray smiled complacently.

"No, I suppose not," answered Miss Anderson, with another sigh, though her glance was full of proud admiration as it wandered across his graceful figure and handsome face. "But you ought to speak to her. There should be no uncertainty whatever."

"Then you won't take pity on me yourself?" said Ray, looking into her face with a curious enjoyment of its evident agitation; "it would be hopeless for me to try to win your love?"

What a white fire flamed under the pallid cheeks! How the lips crimsoned till they were almost of as vivid a glow as flowing blood. Andneath the lowered inky lashes the eyes glimmered fiercely with passionate tenderness. Ray saw the purple lines under the delicate nails of the clenched hands clasped across her breast, and marked well the strained, agonized chord in the voice which answered:

"Be quiet, Ray! Do you think I am a woman to make myself a laughing-stock in the sight of all the world? Do you think, though there were no other slightest imped-

ment, I would give people a chance to say, 'There is a poor silly fool who has cheated herself into believing it is herself, and not her gold, which has won a husband young enough to be her son?'"

"Who need care what the world says?" said Ray.

She turned upon him, almost choked by contending passions.

"Ray, Ray, don't you love Amy Atherton? Don't you care for her at all?"

"Faith, I don't know. To-night, here in this room, I am half dazed. I am only thinking how magnificent you are, Miss Anderson."

She rose hastily from her seat, and began pacing to and fro, the rich golden satin folds trailing behind her on the carpet. When she came back to him, her face was calm again.

"Ray," said she, "I do like you very much. You know it, or you would not have dared to speak to me in that way. I think I am the best friend you have had in the world, ever since you were a boy. You were a pretty winning child, and Mrs. Dexter brought you here very often. I learned to love you then, and have never changed since. I have, as you know, no family ties of my own. I have no wish or desire to marry, and somehow all my aspirations and hopes have been given to you. I wish you to have this fortune of mine, and there is but one way for you to win it. I am glad she is a good and pretty girl, this little Amy. I want you to marry her and be happy. And yet I shall be inexpressibly thankful if you do not let her drive me from your affections. I grasp greedily at the faintest straw which shows that you have any admiration or affection for me. I am wild, hungry, famishing for your love, Ray. O, never, never be cold and careless toward me! It is so little, so very little that you can give, at the best. But you are to marry Amy. Yes, I see by your eyes that you think this is an extraordinary speech. And it is. But I am an extraordinary woman, and you must make allowance for that. Ray, Ray, I would die here at your feet before I would lose your affection or your respect."

"As if that were possible!" said the young man, even his selfish nature touched by the smothered passion of her voice.

And he took the white jewelled hand and kissed it twice. She gave a little nervous shudder (it was the right hand), and drew it from him.

"And now, Ray, I think we understand each other and are content."

"I suppose I ought to be," answered Ray.

"You know I give you my solemn promise to remain unmarried. Then the fortune must go to Amy, and you will marry her. I will take her here as mistress the very moment she is your wife, and you are both to live with me—with me always," she continued, eagerly.

"I'll speak to Amy to-morrow," returned Ray, promptly; "that consoles me, if I am to see you here always. You will wear that dress for me, won't you, when we come to this room?"

Miss Anderson smiled graciously, and presently brought in a tray heaped with delicacies, and served him with her own hands. And presently, congratulating himself upon his importance and golden prospects, Ray Dexter took his leave.

Miss Anderson stood just as he had left her, in her royally-furnished room, full half an hour, bolt upright, with set teeth and motionless eyes, and limp down-falling arms. Then suddenly she flung herself passionately upon the floor, the golden satin crushed heedlessly, the arms stretched forward as if to grasp some help and support, and the white anguished face pressed to the carpet in a wild abandonment of grief.

"O I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it!" cried she. "It is killing me to crush down this wild yearning for him—this terrible secret is killing me. I long so to fling myself at his feet, to rain my wild tears, my passionate kisses upon him. O Ray, Ray! if you could only understand! But I will not tell you! No, I will never tell you. You look up to me now. I can see it. I soar before you as some grand, powerful, superior nature. Let me hold the place while I can. You must marry the girl, but if she wins your thoughts away from me, I know I shall hate her!"

She lay there grovelling in anguish, then sprang suddenly to her feet with a short bitter laugh.

"This is a new role for Serena Anderson! Pshaw! I am nervous and foolish. Shall I shrink now? Shall I yield to weakness at this late hour?"

She went to the salver, poured out a glass of wine and drank it hastily. It was growing upon Miss Anderson, to steady her nerves in that way.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## MISTAKING HER SPHERE.

Nell, Clifford

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## MISTAKING HER SPHERE.

BY NELL CLIFFORD.

THE warm sunlight of a rich September afternoon glinted among the waves and braids of golden hair that adorned the head of Minnie Wayne, touching it up with an added glory of coloring. The shapely head is bent and resting for support on two white well-made hands. We cannot see the earnest face with its luminous eyes, delicate mouth, and changeful hues, exquisite as the pink and white of sweet pea bloom. She has sat by that modest desk for the last hour, ever since she dismissed her pupils, debating in her own mind a new step which she has been urged to take.

Glenville, the hamlet where she resided, had its miniature Sorosis, not honored by so many noble and famous women as its mother Sorosis of Gotham; but still including many ladies of average talent both single and married. The disaffected, the ambitious, the lonely, the ugly, and now and then a fair young enthusiast like Minnie Wayne, were numbered among its members. In truth Glenville was a kind of paradise for people with ultra notions. Rights and wrongs were discussed here with a perfect abandon, delightful to reformers and agitators. Minnie was an orphan in humble circumstances, and

at the earnest request of her mother's old friend, had come to Glenville from the mountains of Vermont to occupy the position of teacher in its public school. It offered her pecuniary independence, and the urgent invitation was thankfully accepted. She had taught here for more than a year now, and had given general satisfaction. She had formed many acquaintances in Glenville, and among them was Royal Kent, who proved something nearer—an admirer, lover. They had been betrothed for some months now, and at the time of falling leaves she had promised to become his wife. But into her life disturbing forces had lately entered, centrifugal to their union, a stirring of ambitions in some sense foreign to her tender-hearted nature.

If Royal had an inkling of what was passing in her mind, he thought it best to make no sign, and allowed little differences to go by with a sparkling smile or as a joke, trusting to the power of his love and future ownership to set matters right. But he did not count upon a kind of martyr-like stubbornness of disposition that underlaid the gentleness of her character, and he was unaware of the strength of the outward influences that were brought to bear upon her enthusiastic and impressible nature.

Minnie was in the habit of lingering in the schoolroom after her pupils were dismissed, to write letters, or to refresh her memory with lessons for the morrow; and Royal had of late fallen into the habit of calling there to accompany her to her boarding-place, which was in some sort also her home. On the particular afternoon we have named, he went as usual, and entering quietly he was before her ere she knew it. With his six feet of altitude, his deep chest and broad shoulders, his fine head and clear searching eyes, he was a splendid specimen of manhood, a regular Western prince of pure blood that came of breathing pure air and drinking pure water. He raised her head.

"How do you do, Minnie?"

"My bodily health is good, thank you," a shade of reserve in her tones imperceptible to any except a lover's ears.

"O, you want fresh air and plenty of outdoor exercise to restore your spirits and put you in a glow mentally and physically. Come, put on your hat and lock your doors and we'll take an exhilarating walk to our home which you may like to look over," with a tender flashing light in his gray orbs. "I'll

be glad when all this tiresome business of taking care of other people's children is done with, and I have you all to myself—wont you be glad also?"

She allowed him to take her hand and lead her out into the yard and over the stile into his own broad meadows. He purposely chose the shaded path by the river that wound pleasantly along almost to the door of their prospective home, rather than the travelled highway, hoping thereby to soothe and cheer her. There was a hesitating, perplexed expression on her countenance, not altogether unminged with pain.

"I am not certain," she replied, looking straight up in his face, and then as straight down.

"Not certain! wait till you have seen what I have to show, and you wont be so cold and indifferent. You are tired, child," apologizing for her to himself.

"I am not a child—I am a woman, with a woman's aspirations," the color wavering on her cheeks.

"O certainly, you are twenty I believe; and your aspirations are a pleasant home, an affectionate husband and blooming children."

"And you think these are always the aims and end of a woman's existence?" indignation in her manner and voice. "What of Anna Dickinson, and Lucy Stone, and Mrs. Stanton, then?"

"I'll wager Anna Dickinson's sweetest dreams and hopes of an earthly future are a husband she can love, and dear little ones to train and pet; but I am not discussing the woman question. Here we are at the threshold of Glen Beulah, our home, a far more interesting subject to me," he said.

It was a lovely cottage with verandas running around three sides, and commanding an exquisite view of meadow and river, with bluffs to vary what had else been almost too monotonously beautiful. He opened a door into an airy hall, then turned and passed his arm around her.

"Welcome, future mistress of Glen Beulah. How do you like it?" drawing her into the sitting-room and to the bow window that looked towards the village of Glenville.

"Like it! It is perfect, Royal. What a kitchen! roomy, pleasant, convenient—why, it will be a delight to work here. It is none of your scripped affairs."

Royal watched her radiant face with delight.

"Then you know one little woman whose

sphere here will be large enough for her energies, queen of a home beyond whose charmed circle she will not care to stray, eh, Minnie?"

Her countenance suddenly fell.

"I did not say so, Royal. I did, however, for a moment forget the path of duty that lies before me. You must listen to me once soberly while I tell you something that I fear will come between us, separating us for all time. I have not told you before because you laugh at me and think me childish."

Royal knit his brows.

"I am serious and attentive. What is the dreadful something?"

"Duty will lead me outside the home circle."

"Of course. You will have church responsibilities, and then there are social obligations to fulfil."

"You willfully misunderstand me, Royal. I want a career."

"A career! and wont you have one with me?"

"Getting breakfast, dinner and supper, day after day, year in and year out, is far from being my idea of a career."

"But, my darling, we purpose to help each other heavenward besides—and do the holy duties of wife and mother count as nothing with you?"

"They are great and onerous, I do not gainsay it; but if I am called to do something else, I should not be excused from it because of these."

"Explain yourself."

"Reforms need pioneer workers, exponents. The question of female suffrage must be brought before the people, and I believe I am called to advocate it in public."

Royal swallowed an explosive.

"A lecturer! never, Minnie, I will not permit my wife to be that."

"You may not permit your *wife*; but what power have you to prevent *me* from becoming one? You cannot coerce my will."

"But Minnie, you are not fitted for the trials of such a vocation. There is such a thing as mistaking one's calling. You surely will not persist in this course?"

"I assuredly shall. If we are going to be at swords' points in this matter, it is better to separate. I refuse to become your wife. I must do my duty as I see it."

"Nonsense. You were not made for the public. You'll never accomplish anything as an orator. If this be the career you are long-

ing for, it will prove as unsatisfactory as 'dead sea apples,' to you." His voice was level, matter-of-fact, cutting.

"You have no appreciation of me. It is time we parted, full time."

"No appreciation! Barring this foolish notion, you are the dearest little woman in the world." His tones were full and sweet with tenderness now; but her pride was hurt, and she was willful.

"Still you will oppose me in this thing I intend to do?"

"I will; Anna Dickinson and Susan B. Anthony to the contrary, notwithstanding. Why? Because I love you and desire your best good and happiness."

"This being your declared position, I *take* the liberty you would in your lordly way deny me. I wish you good afternoon."

She turned abruptly, defiantly down the path leading to the road, and walked rapidly towards the residence of Mrs. Rand, looking neither to the right nor left. Her brain was in a tumult.

"He would set up his government over me, telling what is, and what is not my duty. I'll show him that I can reign over myself. Others as good as he and with far more liberal views, think me competent to fill the place I have marked out for myself."

Thus she talked to herself, but all the while an undercurrent of pain told her that she had thrown away the dearest prize of her life. She slept none that night, but wrestled with her sorrow, trying to master it. She worked herself into thinking that her time and influence must be given to the cause, at all events. Every great reform has its martyrs, though they may not all perish at the stake, she thought. Minnie Wayne is not the only one who has made grand mistakes in regard to sphere and duties. Men and women do it every day, and the blunders would be laughable if they were not also sad.

Royal, so summarily dismissed and liberated, was angry at first; but it softened into a pitying tenderness. He refused in his heart to consider their engagement broken, and resolved to watch over her welfare as he found opportunity, until he had occasion to believe that Minnie had ceased to love him. We shall find him acting in accordance with this resolution.

We have said there were powerful influences bearing upon Minnie. These were chiefly in the persons of Mrs. Foster and her brother Evan Curtis. To the honor of Mrs.

Foster, be it said, she did really entertain a warm affection for Minnie, and a fond, partial regard for her talents. She truly thought her a young lady of much promise and future availability. Mrs. Foster was a kind-hearted, but not a well-balanced character; visionary and impractical, but still possessing the magnetism of earnestness, and a wonderful fascination of manner that drew young persons of Minnie's stamp of mind to look upon her as little less than an oracle. Evan Curtis was altogether the reverse of his sister, except in the art of seductive flattery and power of fascination. He was loose in morals, but had the devil's unscrupulous faculty of transforming himself into "an angel of light," if it best served his purposes. His place of business and residence was Chicago, but he got in the way of running up to Glenville every fortnight or so; and after once meeting Minnie at his sister's the habit became chronic! Her beauty, innocence and freshness interested him; and he resolved to win her if he could. Her engagement to Royal was no secret, but it rather whetted his determination instead of changing it. He was master of delicate compliments; and well-timed words of encouragement always went straight to the mark. He professed a brother's interest in Minnie and her efforts; and, finally, she submitted the essays she read before the members of her club to his inspection and criticism. He also made himself acquainted with Royal Kent's peculiarities in a quiet way, because he was desirous of informing himself with what and whom he had to cope. Minnie kept no concealed meanings from him, for he was skilled in physiognomy, and it was not difficult for any to read so frank and natural a girl. Need we add that he did much to inflame her ambition? He correctly estimated that a rupture of her engagement would follow as a result of the schooling he and his sister were giving her. No one, however, could have been more sympathizing and tenderly fraternal than he, when she informed him what she had done. Now that she was her own again, she was urged by her joint advisers to make lecturing her life-work. Preliminary to her grand debut, she was to make trial speeches in adjoining school districts, in order to accustom herself to appearing before the public. Mrs. Foster advised this course, inasmuch as she really believed Minnie was called to the work. Evan, with the hope that it would widen the breach between her and Royal. Accordingly she came

before the people with a partial success, that he told her was in the highest degree encouraging for a tyro.

"You'll wake up and find yourself famous, some morning," said Mrs. Foster, giving her a motherly embrace.

A sickly smile was her reply.

Minnie's real appearance in public was made, however, in the town hall of a large village some weeks afterwards. Mrs. Foster and her brother accompanied her thither; but Mrs. Foster, being taken with a severe attack of sick headache on her arrival at the hotel, could go no further, and Minnie, without the shelter and support of her presence, was obliged to proceed to her appointment under cover of Evan Curtis's protection. This troubled her, and it was with a trembling frame she walked to the place assigned her, facing the sea of faces, upturned and scanning her every movement. She was the subject of a real stage fright, and felt so giddy that it was with the greatest difficulty she stood upon her feet, unable to articulate a word. Fortunately, her lecture was a written one; and after what seemed an age, she found her voice, whose tones, feeble at first, grew firmer towards the close.

It is unnecessary to follow her course of argument, and we do not purpose to do it. Suffice it to say the whole thing was a torture to her, and if she was at all emulous of martyrs, she had a grand chance for a long martyrdom in the life she had chosen. The presence of Royal Kent as a listener, also tended to unnerve her. Only too glad when her task was over, she waited in a small room adjoining the hall, while Mr. Curtis attended to some necessary business of the meeting. It communicated with a kind of vestibule. While resting, two male voices in conversation discussed herself and lecture.

"A very pretty essay for a school exhibition—nothing more," said one.

"Some good ideas, clothed in tolerable rhetoric, but she wasn't cut out for a speaker. Sweet little thing, how I pitied her! She acted very much as though she had been dragged there against her will."

Minnie felt herself blushing with mortification and chagrin at the freedom of their criticism; but listened anxiously for the reply.

"I shouldn't be surprised if she was. At any rate she has woefully mistaken her sphere. And under the auspices of Evan Curtis, one of the worst libertines of Chicago, too! Why,

I wouldn't trust a sister of mine to his care for a fortune—I should consider her reputation stained for all time."

A third voice interrupted him here.

"Do you speak truth? Do you know it to be fact what you affirm of Mr. Curtis?"

"I can take my oath on it if necessary, sir," surprise in the modulations of his tones.

"Excuse me, sir. I feel an interest in the young lady Mr. Curtis has in his charge, hence my abruptness in addressing you. Pardon me."

The third voice was Royal's.

"Well, young man, here is my card. I belong to the same banking-house as Mr. Curtis, and have spoken of him from personal knowledge. If the lady is a friend of yours, warn her of her danger."

Minnie was frightened now. If there was one thing she was proud of, it was a stainless name based on the foundation of a virtuous character. How to rid herself of Evan Curtis was now her one thought. Humiliating as it was, she determined to seek Royal's protection at once. It was meet she should be so humbled, for had she not deserved it? "And Roy acknowledges an interest in me yet," she thought, with a sudden thrill of joy.

She passed through the door separating her from Royal and found him alone.

"I overheard the whole, Mr. Kent, and I come to ask you if you will see me safely with Mrs. Foster and make one of our party home to-morrow?"

"Gladly, if I may have the pleasure."

He drew her arm within his own and walked silently by her side. Presently, tears went splashing over his hand to the walk.

"May I ask if you find your career satis-

factory, Minnie?" It was said so gently she could not take offence.

"No," she answered, "I've made a fool of myself," sobbing.

"Darling, are you willing to come back to me, and can you be contented with lowly home duties, and to reign queen of my heart?"

"You cannot desire it now?"

"I do, most earnestly."

"With all my faults and weaknesses?"

"Yes."

She put both hands in his.

"I haven't been so happy for weeks," she said.

You may be sure that Mrs. Foster was surprised at the addition of Royal to the party; but Minnie explained as simply, politely and directly as she could. Evan Curtis was in a rage; but Royal handed him the card of his fellow-clerk, and bade him inquire for the particulars of this change of him. Evan turned a shade more swarthy over the sudden light that had been thrown upon his private life, and shut his teeth tightly. The next morning he made a reasonable excuse for returning to Chicago, and was politely excused.

Minnie was soon afterwards married and duly installed as mistress of Glen Beulah. When a little Roy came to sing in the home nest a year later, she whispered to Royal:

"There is joy, and love, and work here for me—all I can do, and I enjoy doing it, as God meant I should. Anna Dickinson may be, doubtless is in her right place; but how I mistook my sphere once, Royal—what a goose I was!"

"A dear little goose," smiling.

**MR. ARUNDEL'S DAUGHTER.**

BY ANNA MASON.

I WAS about to take a journey to Philadelphia to transact business for the firm of Van Dyck & Co., to which I had just been admitted as a partner, after serving a term of years as a bookkeeper.

My father, having reached those balmy days when easy-chair and slippers woo with irresistible force, and being well off in this world's goods, had decided to retire from business, leaving me to occupy his place in the firm.

Thus, at the age of twenty-four, with good health, a tolerable personal appearance and fine business prospects, I had as fair a start in life as one could ask.

In Philadelphia, aptly termed "The City of Brotherly Love," as I thought, when I had partaken of its hospitalities, resided an old friend of my father, who had not seen me since my childhood.

By letter it was arranged that on my arrival I should immediately repair to Mr. Arundel's house, he insisting on receiving me as his guest, and make his acquaintance, and that of his family.

The exact time of my coming was not fixed, and thus it happened that early one February evening I reached their house, to find it brilliantly lighted, and myself a little unexpected.

Mr. and Mrs. Arundel, both of whom I at once liked, extended to me so cordial a reception, however, that I could but feel myself welcome.

"Our young people have company this evening," remarked Mr. Arundel; who seemed to be a very pleasant and jovial gentleman. "Had we known when to expect you, it shouldn't have been so. Your first evening should have been a quiet one, passed in our midst, devoted to breaking the ice and getting comfortably used to us."

"Never mind," interrupted Mrs. Arundel's cheerful voice. "I trust we shall succeed in making Mr. Van Dyck feel at home with us as it is. Our daughter and her young friends propose to entertain us this evening with some private theatricals, which I hope Mr. Van Dyck will not feel too fatigued to witness."

"To be sure not! to be sure not!" exclaimed Mr. Arundel, heartily, before I could reply. "We'll give our young friend Arthur, here, plenty of time in which to rest before the play begins, and he can receive his introductions later. So, my boy, we'll have a cup of tea, and let John show you to your room at once."

Nearly an hour later, after a careful toilet made with thoughts of the daughter who had been mentioned, I descended to the parlor, and found it pretty well filled with guests seated as expectant spectators, while a subdued murmur of voices was audible from beyond the scarlet curtain which hid the back room from view.

"Come here, Arthur. Take a seat by me," said Mr. Arundel. "The play is about to begin, I believe."

Even as he spoke a bell tinkled, and the curtain was clumsily swept aside. It disclosed a small but beautifully constructed stage, and a background of scarlet drapery.

The play which followed was by no means remarkable. I remember there being a fair persecuted heroine, Lady Alice, a dark and handsome lover with a guitar and velvet cloak, and a brilliant and beautiful rival to the fair lady, who, disguised as a waiting-maid, wove her spells about Sir Eustace.

The play wound up with an elopement, in which the rival escapes with the false lover, leaving Lady Alice to a broken heart.

Absurd and shallow as was this plot, the play was rendered in the most spirited manner. The part of Lady Alice was played with touching pathos, by a lovely girl with fair hair and gentle eyes, dressed simply in white.

Mr. Arundel pointed her out to me.

"That young lady is my daughter Julia. She is called very pretty," he added, a little complacently.

"And merits the praise," I assented, warmly. "But who is the dark one—the bewitching Elise? I confess I've fallen in love with her."

Mr. Arundel laughed so heartily that there were several cries of "Hush!" ere he replied:

"That young lady is my daughter, Miss Elise Arundel, very much at your service. She's a sad hoyden, I assure you, Arthur."

"Perfectly bewitching, at any rate," I murmured.

In fact, I could not keep my eyes off the

tall and dazzling beauty, who, in short skirts, high-heeled slippers, velvet bodice, ruffled apron, and a captivating bit of head-dress, was so bright and bewitching that almost it seemed Sir Eustace might be pardoned for faltering in his allegiance. But when the disguise of the French waiting-maid was thrown aside, and Elise appeared resplendent in scarlet satin, with train of velvet and rich lace, her dark hair clustering in short thick curls above her noble brow, surmounted by a diadem of diamonds, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks glowing with excitement, I exclaimed aloud:

"Glorious creature!"

She may have heard, for she turned and smiled on me.

"Miss Elise is radiantly beautiful," said I to Mr. Arundel.

"Do you think so? Well, perhaps you are right! You see she's younger than Julia, and a tomboy. She's developing rapidly, no doubt."

Mr. Arundel seemed shaking with uncontrollable laughter. I was disgusted. He had called that exquisite creature by an odious name.

"Miss Julia is evidently her papa's favorite," I thought to myself, somewhat bitterly.

"Here come the young ladies themselves," said Mr. Arundel, the play being over. "Very fine actresses you make, my dears." He then presented me.

Miss Arundel held out her hand half timidly. Miss Elise looked at me with her large blazing eyes, then said, heartily:

"I noticed you from the stage, Mr. Van Dyck, and knew at once I should like you. I played my best to please you."

I was a little disconcerted by this charming candor; but every one laughed, and Miss Julia asked:

"Are you sure you didn't fancy Mr. Van Dyck the hero of the play, and so make such an effort to fascinate poor Sir Eustace?"

"You've guessed it exactly," replied the frank young lady. "You see, Mr. Van Dyck," she went on, addressing me, "sister Julia has been flattered till she expects all the attentions; but I claim you." The daring girl had actually taken my arm.

"Run away with Mr. Van Dyck, if you please, Elise!" cried Miss Julia, blushing, but joining in the general laugh.

"You may have a dance with your conquest, if Mr. Van Dyck chooses to be regarded in that light," seconded Mr. Arundel.

"I've certainly no objections," I retorted, laughing.

In another moment Elise and I were whirling among the dizzy waltzes.

"Every one is looking and laughing at us," remarked my eccentric partner, "as if I danced like an elephant."

"Impossible!" exclaimed I, deprecatingly. "Your waltzing is the very essence of grace—the poetry of motion."

"At any rate, I've had enough of it. It is lovely in the conservatory; let us go in there and get cool by the fountain."

I followed her lead willingly enough.

"Isn't this delightful?" sighed Elise, as soon as we found ourselves alone, dropping her somewhat dashing manner, and looking up at me with a languid, almost timid glance.

She caught my admiring gaze and smiled, revealing dazzling teeth.

"Here's a seat among the roses for you, Mr. Van Dyck. The water from this fountain is as cool as ice, and as sparkling as diamonds; let me fill this goblet for you! I'll be Hebe, cupbearer to the gods, and you shall be the glorious Apollo. I'll take care not to stumble, to be banished from my Olympus. I'm in paradise, Mr. Van Dyck!"

"Your allusions are classical, fair lady; but are you in earnest in saying you're in paradise?"

"Of course I am, monsieur, with the handsomest gentleman in the company all to myself, and I a younger sister."

Here Elise, half kneeling, presented the goblet with a bewitching grace. Judge me not too harshly, kind reader, when I admit that my heart beat rapidly. I was young and susceptible.

"I've no accomplishments," went on my charmer. "I cannot play the piano, nor sing, nor dance like sister Julia; but—" here she paused, and looked at me half defiantly—"I can play billiards!"

"A sort of Di Vernon," retorted I, by no means startled from my self-possession.

"O dear! I'll tell papa you called me that!"

"Did you call me *dear*?" I asked, sillily.

"No, I never call gentlemen *dear*; but it must be very pleasant."

"Try it to me, then, sweet Elise!" I exclaimed, enthusiastically, enraptured by her engaging candor.

Elise made no reply but to drop her head till her cheek touched my hand. I was intoxicated. I believe I bent down and kissed her.

O, to think of the folly of that evening! I confessed my love to the fascinating beauty.

"You don't think me rude and forward, then, as papa does—as they all do?" she asked.

"No, Elise, I adore your simplicity and frankness. What joy to pass through life with you?"

"O, really, Mr. Van Dyck?" And Elise nestled close to me.

I caught her in my arms. She was shaking with laughter.

"Please don't be angry, Mr. Van Dyck. I really like you very much; but I cannot marry you."

"And why not?"

"Papa wouldn't believe in such sudden love, for one reason."

"But I'll make him believe in it! Hark! They're calling to us!"

"So they are," said Elise; and she actually kissed me, of her own accord, ere we went back to the parlors, where our reappearance was greeted with much merriment, and was made the subject of more sly jokes than good taste seemed to me to warrant. Elise took it very coolly.

"Did Mr. Van Dyck propose to you?" asked Julia.

"Of course he did. You see, Mr. Van Dyck, I made a bet I could get you to propose!"

Could I believe my ears? How had my idol become clay!

The guests shortly after departed, and when good-nights had been spoken we all retired to our rooms.

Elise pressed my hand when no one observed us, and whispered:

"Dream of me, dearest!"

It was long before I slept that night for excitement. I lay awake, haunted by the vision of a dazzling creature in scarlet satin, varied now and then by another vision—that of a fairy-like little lady in white, with great gentle eyes.

I was frightened, too, at the thought of my own precipitancy, and very doubtful as to what my father would say to Elise as my

wife. I could not deny, even to myself, that she was forward and bold:

It was, as may be imagined, with very mixed emotions that I descended to the breakfast-room the next morning. Mr. and Mrs. Arundel greeted me cordially, and soon Miss Arundel appeared, looking very fresh and sweet in her white morning-dress, with clusters of scarlet geranium blossoms in her hair and at her throat.

I was more impressed by her than I had been the evening before, and wondered how I had failed to appreciate her extreme beauty and loveliness.

We were enjoying an animated conversation when the door opened, and a tall youth of fifteen or thereabouts entered the room.

"My son Fred, Mr. Van Dyck," said Mr. Arundel.

The lad advanced and seized my hand in a hearty clasp, and—no!—could it be? The dark eyes, the saucy smile, the clustering curls had all belonged to my Elise of last evening.

If any doubts remained, they were dispelled by a burst of laughter, in which all were fain to join.

"We don't, I fear, meet as lovers this morning, Mr. Van Dyck?" queried the impressive youth. "Nevertheless, you need not look daggers at me. Come now, confess that I took you in capitally. You never dreamed Elise was Fred?"

"Indeed, no," I agreed, joining in the laugh, although it was at my own expense. "I never was so completely sold."

"I shall teach Julia how to manage such affairs," continued the elated Fred. "She has much to learn yet. No one ever proposed to her on an evening's acquaintance, I'll be bound. Don't look so chop-fallen, old fellow; I dare say I'd be as big a fool over as pretty a girl. Rouge and a satin gown add greatly to my beauty."

"O you puppy!" cried his father, in an interval of choking laughter. "Have done with your nonsense, and take your seat at the table. Had I dreamed you would have carried your joke so far, I'd not have humored it. Mr. Van Dyck will think we have broken all the laws of hospitality."

"Not at all," I murmured. "I enjoy a good joke." My polite answer was made despite agonies of mortification. My smile was intended to disarm the suspicion that

I might be chewing the cud of bitter meditation; beneath it my soliloquy was, "What a precious fool I've made of myself!"

Silently I determined to leave the scene where I had enacted so sorry a part at the earliest opportunity.

"I'll take Mr. Van Dyck in tow," announced Master Fred. "*He shall benefit* by my rowing and billiards, after all. It will be better for you, Mr. Van Dyck, than to leave you to Julia's music and croquet, which often prove snares to the unwary. As to her embroidery, that's even worse, for into it she weaves hearts!"

"Don't be so silly, Fred," suggested Julia, blushing deliciously.

Breakfast proceeded pleasantly enough, and every one seemed bent on making me feel at home, and in dispelling any disagreeable impressions I might have received from late events. They succeeded so well that before the meal was over I felt quite at ease.

Somehow I didn't leave in such hot haste as in my first moments of chagrin I had determined, but lingered on from day to day. When at last I did take my departure, it was with the understanding that I should return soon and claim my bride. Dear little Julia said good-by with smiles quivering on her lips and tears starting to her sweet eyes. Master Fred shook hands heartily in promising that he'd give up, once for all, *teasing his future brother-in-law* about the beautiful and too fascinating Elise.

## MR. BARTEAUX.

BY CATHARINE EARNSHAW.

"ARE you ready?" impatiently called a voice at the foot of the stairs. "Charlie has been waiting this half hour."

"I'll be down-directly;" came the answer from the little chamber, within which a girl was shaking out the folds of her muslin dress, and looking in the glass to see how they "hung."

"Let him wait," she said, to herself, bending toward the glass, and seeing therein the reflection of a faultless face—faultless as to hue and feature. Clear in profile, rose-pink and lily in color, with the requisite almond-shaped eyes of cloudless azure—the ringlety hair of chestnut, and straight eyebrows of the same color.

"Let him wait," she repeated. "I cannot go to the festival looking dowdy, because I had to hurry."

A second inspection of a ribbon in her hair decided upon its rejection, and at last, with the wavy locks loosely confined, she put her hat on with care to look carelessly, and descended, entering the parlor with her gloves in her hand.

The young man's face grew radiant as he saw her; manifestly he would have given his life for one of those curls. But she chose to be very high and distant, because she knew everything she wore was just enhancing her beauty, and she liked to see this man so visibly adoring.

It is true she liked him best of anything, next to herself, and was going to marry him; but she had no idea of the tremors and flushes of love he experienced. To have attempted to tell her would have been talking in an unknown tongue to her. I think Robert Browning must have had some such woman in his mind, when he said:

"But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,  
Though we prayed you,  
Paid you, brayed you  
In a mortar, for you could not, Sweet."

The September sunshine was lying warm and yellow on the flaunting dabbias of the little garden through which the two passed to the carriage that awaited them at the gate.

Mabel Saunders paused among the flowers, considering what one she should pluck for her own sweet wearing. Her superficial taste saved her from any of the gaudy blooms, and she chose a pale mottled carnation pink whose spicy penetrating perfume brought to Charlie Wayland dreams of some rare garden, under some miraculous sun, to which he would one day lead his love—this hour in muslin, whose small fingers touched his arm. After, the fragrance of the carnation gave him that most keen of pains—the knowledge that you have invested a worthless one with the ideal that is dearest to you.

The light carriage flashed along over the hard yellow road, Mabel's blue eyes dancing with the exhilarating motion, with her own consciousness of looking well—with expectation of the gayeties to which she was speeding.

By a trough at the roadside, into which trickled the ice-cold stream from a spring in the rocky hill near by, stood a horse, his nose plunged in the cool water. Its rider had not dismounted, but sat negligently, while his horse drank. He saw the carriage wheel round the curve in the road—saw that figure, as fair and perfect as a picture—with its bright face and clear eyes, and a smile of admiration swept across his lips; and, as the couple rode nearer, he turned in his seat, and beckoned slightly, determined upon a better sight at so unusual a picture.

Charlie drew rein, and looked questioningly at the stranger, who said:

"Will you tell me the road to the Episcopal church of Wylding?"

Charlie writhed beneath the audacious gaze fixed upon Mabel, for, though the interrogation was put to him, the man's eyes never left the face of the girl.

"You can go straight on, and turn to the first left, or you can take the old road which branches from this; by those bars, yonder. Either will lead you there."

It was only by the utmost control that Charlie could prevent his hand from sending his whip tingling across that dark mustached face.

"Thanks," said the stranger, and, as Charlie drove away, the man lifted his hat, with the air of a chevalier, to Mabel. He said softly to himself, as he pulled up his horse's head:

"An amusement for my leisure hours while I stay in this devilishly dull place. And a lover to torment, into the bargain. Quite a godsend!" And he trotted slowly after the flying carriage.

"What a striking-looking man!" exclaimed Mabel, longing to look back, but denying herself, for fear he might be watching.

"I've a great mind to go back and horse-whip him!" said Charlie, his sinewy hand looking as if it might accomplish that feat.

"That would be a pretty thing to do," remarked Mabel, secretly amused. "We shouldn't get to the festival in time, and might delay him, too."

"How do you know he's going?" asked Charlie, looking suspiciously at her, and wondering if she could help feeling resentment at such a gaze from a stranger. He felt an unrecognized pang, as he saw she had not been angry with the man.

"I imagined so, because he inquired the way to the church where the festival is," replied Mabel. "You ought to know that, for you told him."

"I should have had a much higher opinion of myself, if I had told him the wrong road," was the response.

"That would have done no good," said the acute girl; "for it's my opinion the man knew the way as well as you did."

Which was very true.

The two rode on, Charlie very moody and dissatisfied with this day from which he had expected so much; Mabel eager to reach the church and discover who was the man who looked so differently from her country admirers.

The horse, ever ready to shy and jump at anything which he could imagine to be sufficient cause, had been somewhat excited by various ghostly-looking stones, and by a pile of shining birchwood close to the road. But the strong arm of his driver had easily subdued him. Now a party of boys in a field by the road, were hastily pulling in a kite, and, as the horse came up opposite, the kite wavered and fell, rattling, right in front of the animal's head. The horse flung out his mane, grandly—fire flashed in his eyes, and he trampled

over the kite, and darted on in the swift run which fear urges.

Mabel was not timid, and she felt entire confidence in Charlie's power to control the horse; but, when suddenly one of the lines parted, and Charlie fell violently back, without one curbing influence on the flying steed, Mabel felt she might be riding to her death.

Charlie knew it was a straight road for a mile further; after that he would not think. He felt conscious of no fear for himself, but his heart was pierced with agony that he should have brought Mabel into danger. Mabel sat very still, not thinking of anything, and hardly able to breathe, so rapid was the motion.

At a little distance in front, the narrow old road came out upon the broader new one over which they were travelling. While they were within a few rods of it, they saw a chestnut horse emerge from it, and its rider turn his head quickly to see who came so furiously. Then he sprang from his horse, and stood awaiting the coming of the leaping animal whose speed seemed increasing rather than diminishing. The two in the carriage recognized the man, and even at that moment Charlie felt a sensation of anger toward him.

The lithe nervous figure leaped at the horse's head, and grasped the bridle as though his hand had been of iron. The horse struggled, reared, then stood and panted. Charlie jumped out and was about to turn to Mabel, but the stranger left the horse's head, thus obliging Charlie to take his place there, and going to the side of the carriage, showing a face paler than its wont, but smiling and careless, extended his hands and lifted Mabel from her seat, saying:

"I could not have been so cruel as to have wished this should happen, but now that it has, I can hardly be sorry for it, as it brings me to your presence."

It was said with a tone, a glance, an *empressment*, which called the scarlet to cheek and lip, lately so pale.

"I hope you are not hurt," Mabel said, thinking she must say something, but much preferring to hear him speak.

"Hurt? No indeed! Then with a laugh—"How should I be hurt in your service?"

The two stood by the carriage, his hand still on her arm, as if she must still need

support after such an escape; his stately, graceful head a little drooped toward her, his swift black eye-glance seeing how beautiful was the transparent carmine, the snowy white, the sapphire eyes, all glorified by excitement.

Charlie was tying together the lines, studiously endeavoring not to look at Mabel, but seeing too plainly how enchanting was her face and figure at this moment. When he had accomplished his work, he advanced, and elaborately thanked the stranger, who received his thanks with a *suavity* in which Charlie felt, but could not see, the scorn.

"The horse is perfectly safe, now, Mabel," he said, "shall we go on? Unfortunately we are now very late."

He could not refuse the tacit demand of the stranger to be allowed to put the lady into the carriage, which was accomplished with the same careless grace with which he appeared to do everything; then he galloped away out of sight, on the road to Wylding.

The two followed more slowly, and almost in utter silence. Soon they drove up to the pretty little brown stone church in which was to be held a celebration in honor of the formation of the society—that day being the first of the fiftieth year of its life.

The people moved in and out beneath the gothic entrance, along whose arch drooped the brightest and sweetest flowers of September. Two or three girls stood at the foot of the stairs that led up to the choir. They advanced to meet Mabel, as she came slowly up the yard, bowing gayly to the young men who lounged there, and who half started forward at sight of her—as if awakened to keener life by her presence.

"We have been waiting so long for you," exclaimed one of the girls; "you know we cannot sing, until they are all here. We thought you would never come. And I was quite angry that the organist should be so late—he has not been here five minutes."

"He?" questioned Mabel, ascending the choir steps, and giving a last arrangement to her hat, as she went. "I thought Ellen Winthrop was to play, as usual."

"O no. You were not here at the last rehearsal—they decided to send for Mr. Barteaux, from B—. He's to play here all the month."

The truth flashed into Mabel's mind, instantly; it was the new organist whom she had twice met this morning.

By this time they were arranged in their seats, and in the body of the church the ranks of fluttering ribbons and black coats became quieter, in expectation of the grand anthem that was to open the festival. Mabel had, as yet, no chance to confirm her suspicion, as to the organist. She sat in the front row of singers, and could not well look behind to where some one sat at the keyboard.

"Is he not handsome—or, rather, so *distingue*?" whispered a fluttering academy miss, by her side.

"How should I know? I cannot see him," was the response.

But she could see Charlie Wayland in the church below; she saw his gaze upon her, and it annoyed her.

The first strains of the organ hushed the murmur, for the strains were unlike any ever heard in that church before. Clear, full, with a triumphant clarion of the hosts of Judah thrilling through. The touch was assured, as though the organist had in command inexhaustible resources. Correct, with a fire and spirit in the playing that fascinated and enchained the ear. But the musician who devoutly loved music—whose very heart and soul were infused with it, would have felt vaguely that this player only laid the riches of intellect and talent at the shrine, that his soul was not worthy of worshipping at such an altar.

But the crowd were swayed, and worthily—they listened breathlessly, and when the words of the anthem burst from the throats of the singers, in unison with those organ strains, they thought that never had been such music. Many eyes filled with rapture, and many a heart throbbed suffocatingly.

Charlie Wayland, listening, and watching the face of her whom he loved, felt the strange pain of music and love. Sometimes, he could distinguish the clear thin soprano of Mabel, who sang so well that one might wonder if she felt all her voice conveyed, for, though not so rich and full, it could be very sweet.

After the anthem, came a prayer from the white-robed minister, then the bustle of going down to the chapel below, where were to be the usual number of charades, semi-sacred colloquies, and to finish with

the bounteous collation which already tempted the hungry eyes of the children. Mabel lingered long enough to catch one glimpse of the organist, and make her suspicion certain, then she was borne off by Wayland.

As for Mr. Barteaux, he had seen the blue ribbon of Mabel's hat in the choir, then all thought of her had been lost in listening to a contralto voice, whose first tones had sent a memory through his mind that thrilled upon the most sensitive chord in his nature.

"It could not be possible," he said, to himself, "that he should meet again the owner of that voice here."

He tried to discover just where she sat, but intervening figures prevented. After the singing, he walked down the steps, his eyes roving restlessly through the crowd for the face he knew so well, but he did not find it. Returning, his glance met the face of Mabel, who was walking away upon her lover's arm.

He flashed a smile upon her, saying inwardly, with something of self-scorn, "that voice has driven this little amusement out of my head." Then he sauntered slowly into the yard, and to the grove of oaks, where some of the younger people, who preferred more freedom, were already wandering.

At the grassy roots of one of these trees, sat Charlie and Mabel, and near them a slender girl leaned against a tree trunk, now and then joining in the desultory conversation. Her face was of that soft clear darkness, unrelieved by any color, save the crimson of her mouth, her eyes gray, but looking much darker, by reason of the ink-black lashes and dark brows—and that indescribable something about the eyes of a brunette that makes them look of a deeper color than they sometimes really are. Mabel began to relate her adventure of the morning, dilating upon the rare grace of the stranger. The girl listened, with a curious smile in her eyes, but her lips only reposing in quiet attention.

"And what did you think of this wonderful cavalier, Mr. Wayland?" asked the girl.

Charlie looked up from the grass he was listlessly braiding, and said:

"Unaccountably I thought of a glittering snake I killed in the field the other day. Now, I think Mr. Barteaux a remarkably fine organist."

"I am glad you killed the snake, Mr. Wayland," said the girl, softly.

The two looked at each other, and she felt that he, also, had an intuition other than jealousy, of the nature of the newcomer.

"I think you two are talking very absurdly, as well as incomprehensibly," exclaimed Mabel, with a bewitching pout, that instantly called all her lover's attention to herself.

"Let us, then, assist in disseminating reason," said a voice near them, and Barteaux came leisurely from among the trees behind them, and was about to sit down on the grass at Mabel's feet, when he perceived the third person whom the bole of the tree had partially screened.

Mabel, who was looking at him, saw a sudden pallor follow a quick flush on his face, then he instantly became careless as ever, and made no sign of recognition. Mabel had no idea of why he should have looked so, and soon ceased wondering. He must be presented to the girl, consequently she said:

"This is Mr. Barteaux, Miss Ray."

Barteaux, with indescribable effrontery, masked in exquisite self-possession, said, as he bowed low:

"It is Miss Ray, then? I fancied I had seen you before; the name recalls you definitely to my remembrance."

Mabel showed the surprise she felt that Charlotte Ray had seen this man before; while Miss Ray said, with a coolness that Charlie Wayland could perceive bordered on disdain:

"Mr. Barteaux's memory is not so good as mine. I remembered him the moment I saw him."

He winced inwardly, but said in his soft musical voice:

"I cannot be too grateful for that fact."

Then he sat down by Mabel, gallantly listening—bestowing attentions which seemed to come so directly from his heart, as to dissipate his usual carelessness. And therein lay his most potent charm. He did not address any remarks to Miss Ray, who talked intermittently with Charlie, until a deputation came to summon them to dinner. Then Barteaux fell behind by the side of Miss Ray, a pale flush coming to his cheek, a deep gleam to his eye, as he found himself so near her. He offered his

arm, and she could not well refuse to let her hand rest there.

Never had woman held such a power over this cynical heartless man, as did this girl who now walked by his side. And she could not but feel sometimes the fascination of his presence, the electric power of those eyes that had looked to her all of love he could know. But his innate untruth she knew as well as felt. His life of dissipated uncertainty—more than all, his falseness to every promise where woman was concerned, too plainly polluted his soul for such a woman as Charlotte Ray ever to come within his power—let him be ever so strongly attached to her.

Now, as he walked with her, though he longed to touch her hand, to clasp the fingers that lay on his arm, he dared not. He bent his head low and said:

"If ever woman was flattered by visible evidence of her power, you have been. I am not used to grow hot, and tremble with delight at meeting one. This morning your voice thrilled through all the singing—I heard only you. Your tone was the first knowledge I had that you were here."

He paused, his burning eyes blazing upon her face, his words echoing with passionate intensity. With all the tenacity and passion of his temperament, this man had resolved that he would conquer the love of this girl—for never had woman been baughty and indifferent to him before.

She walked in silence. She knew how powerful was the attraction he felt, and knowing that, she could not but be conscious of the magnetism of his presence. Still she wisely forbore to speak, to iterate words she had already spoken. There rose before her a pale blonde face, with sad wistful eyes—the face of a girl whom this man in sportive mood had won to love him with the one grand passion of a life. It had been rare amusement for him.

As she thought, Charlotte Ray's eyes grew full of a sheeny dangerous light. Unconsciously she withdrew her hand from his arm, as she said:

"What if I should tell you I did not believe a word of all you say?"

It was not a wise remark for her to have made, and she knew it instantly.

"Have I, then, but to convince her of my sincerity?" he asked himself, with a feeling of triumph.

They had reached the door of the chapel. Miss Ray would not allow him to escort her in, and a while after, she saw him by the side of Mabel—saw that subtle smile of his shedding its radiance into the heart of the unsuspecting girl.

It was evident in a fortnight that Mr. Barteaux was prosecuting his amusement with vigor and success. Miss Ray saw the look of fierce gloom that had settled upon the once bright face of Wayland—her quick-seeing eyes detected the restless flush, the eager, illy-subdued expectations and disappointments that began to make the life of Mabel Saunders what she was making that of Wayland. Miss Ray saw, and her soul rose, rebellious. Her tact and resolution had thus far succeeded, and she had had no interview alone with him since she had met him at the festival. While she despised him, there was a power, an electrical strength of eye, and voice, and presence, that she could easily know might hold another in a spell whose influence she had faintly felt.

It was a night far into September—a soft sweet night of summer and autumn united in that unison which is so dearly sweet. The stars shone through a fragrant mist—a slender moon had already passed goldenly down below the horizon. The star sheen glittered on the single jewel Charlotte wore, as her hand rested on the shoulder of Mabel. The two stood in the garden of Mabel's home. Both their faces revealed the earnestness of their conversation, but Mabel's aspect was incredulous and fearful. Every moment her eyes wandered restlessly toward the gate, and the late rose she twirled had lost nearly all its petals.

"You do not tell me seriously, that you have broken plight with Wayland," Charlotte said, after a pause, which to both was full of unpleasantness.

"Yes, seriously; you may believe it," was the reply.

"And you fancy Barteaux loves you?" asked the tender pitying voice, that could not make Mabel angry.

"It seems so," said Mabel, slowly; then a deep blush stained her cheek, in the dusk, and she continued with low vehemence, "and I do not know why—but I would do anything he willed—I never knew love before. I could die for him!"

"Dear child, believe me, he has no glim-

mer of love for you; and it is not love you feel."

Her hand clasped the fingers of Mabel with a grasp that some way had healing and strength in it.

"It is, however, something that has changed my whole life," said Mabel, in a weary tone.

Charlotte's lips were parted to reply, when the two caught the sound of steps, and the gate swung open. Charlotte pushed Mabel hurriedly up to the door, whispering:

"Sit concealed in the parlor, by the open window!" And the girl passively obeyed.

Barteaux saw the shining of some white drapery, and thought it Mabel; but when he saw the prideful pose of figure, his face lost its look of easy supremacy—his pulses their calm beat. He came up to where she stood near the vine-wreathed window.

"At last accident blesses us," he said, in such tones, as the listening girl within the house had never heard before.

"Why not say Providence?" asked Charlotte; "I feel like ascribing this meeting thus high."

He came close to her; his eyes glowed through the darkness. The unexpectedness of his meeting with her—the strong desire he had felt for an hour like this with the woman who so strangely enthralled him, gave to his manner an impetuous passion that would have made him irresistible had there been one particle of love in the heart of the girl to whom he plead. And Mabel learned that night more suffering than she had ever known before.

She heard her name in his tone, uttered with an indifferent scorn that tingled like fire through her veins. In the passionate words of love he poured out, she recognized

so truly how false had been every look and tone to her. In that hour of trial, Mabel's pride, her vanity, her better nature, everything within her, rose to sustain the shock. And in it all, she felt surely that she had forever fallen from the ideal one good man had enshrined her in.

Charlotte stood icily calm; only a steady flush burned in her cheeks—a hue invisible to the man before her.

"I beg you—I command you to desist," she exclaimed, as soon as she could find breath to break the burning eloquence.

There was that in her tone, her gesture, that seemed to freeze him.

There was dead despair in his voice, as he said, slowly:

"And you *never* could love me?"

"Never," she said, with unhesitating certainty in her accent,

Mabel knew that he took Charlotte's hand, that he held it an instant, then he walked down the path.

The next day, the people of the village were surprised that Mr. Barteaux had left them so suddenly.

Mabel could not take up her life as though such experience had never entered it—some poison of that time would linger long with her—the longer, because her character was not so strong as some to shake itself pure of contamination.

Wayland had left the village, to battle with a disappointment too keen to be endured there, where a fair face and blue eyes might suddenly revive all the old agony.

Who shall say but in years to come, Mabel may not grow to be, what in his faithful heart her lover so truly believed her to be?

## MR. SMALLPIECE'S LEGACY.

BY FRANK H. ANGIER.

WHEN people wanted to get to the office of Mr. Smallpiece, they were obliged to go up a very dirty street and through a dirtier alley, and then under a dark and gloomy archway into a little open court, where Mr. Smallpiece's sign, a square sheet of tin painted white and lettered in black, revealed the fact that the occupant of the office over whose door it was nailed, was Simon Smallpiece Esq., Attorney and Counsellor at Law. The office itself was quite pleasant and cheerful when you once got inside of it, for its back windows opened upon a sunny little bit of common, green with soft grass and waving trees in summer, and spotlessly pure with an expanse of virgin snow in winter. On many an afternoon had Mr. Smallpiece, sitting at his worm-eaten old desk in the antique window-space, looked up from his work and catching sight of a dickey-bird hopping about among the rustling leaves outside the open window, become lost in dreamy reverie which led him to waste whole hours in following the unrestrained vagaries of idle thought. In fact, dreaming was almost the only recreation which Mr. Smallpiece ever had now. He could remember, and that easily enough, a time when he was not the childless old man which life had left him years ago. There had been a day when a cheerful home, graced with the luxuries of life and rendered sacred by the love of wife and daughter, was not the least of his worldly possessions; and now his wife lay sleeping under a round, green mound of turf in the churchyard yonder, while his daughter—

"Worse even than dead!" exclaimed Simon Smallpiece, clenching his hand as he thought of her. "Worse even than dead. May my curse go with her, and with him who robbed me of her."

And then he sat back in his leathern-covered chair, biting the end of his penholder savagely, and thought, with bitterness in his heart, of the day, so long ago, when she had come to him holding Will Allen by the hand, and when Will, standing proudly before him in the full nobility of stalwart manhood, had asked him for Nellie as his wife. Mr. Smallpiece remembered, too, with a chuckle of exultation, how he had shown Will Allen to

the door at once and forbid him ever entering his house again; how he had sent Nellie to her room in a flood of tears, and how he had himself returned to Will Allen all the foolish letters and keepsakes which he ever had the audacity to send to Simon Smallpiece's daughter. The old lawyer could not but acknowledge to himself, as he sat thinking of these things, that he had made somewhat of a jackass of himself, after all, for Nellie had obstinately refused to marry the wealthy suitor whom he had selected for her, and had persisted in her silly attachment for this lout of a countryman, whom she ultimately ran away with and married. But Simon Smallpiece had sent his loudest curses after them, and had never seen the face of his only child from that day to this. He never would forgive her, and there was comfort in assuring himself of that, at all events.

And so old Simon had lived alone ever since, his temper soured against all mankind, and his heart, if he ever had one, which is doubtful, chilled to a thing of stone. He was reputed rich, but few ever saw the color of his money. No beggar ever came to him for alms, or if he did so once, was very careful to keep clear of him forever after. His lodgings, in the upper story of the same old building with his office, were miserable and mean in the extreme. His clothes were threadbare, and his face was pinched with the hard lines of avarice and selfishness. With no charity for the suffering, with no feeling of kindness for the unfortunate, with his heart closed to every appeal from womanly tenderness or childish innocence, Simon Smallpiece avowed himself the enemy of the world, and passed his life in picking quarrels with it. This perhaps was one reason of his success in business—a success most signally evident in his ability to "nurse" his suits tenderly, and to prolong their litigation in a most marvellous manner.

One lazy afternoon, Mr. Smallpiece, chancing to look up from the misty depths of a long chancery bill in which he was just then submerged, caught sight through the open window, of a little child standing upon the step of a house on the opposite side of the common. There was nothing interesting to Mr.

Smallpiece in children. As a general rule he hated them, but as he happened to glance at this wee little lady, standing, so plump and rosy, upon the doorstep, she suddenly clapped her chubby hands together and gave such a joyous little scream of delight that Simon actually smiled. Yes, he did, and it was something he had not done for a very long time. Looking in the direction in which the child was gazing, he saw a man, clad in the dress of a workman, coming across the common. And this person, when he came to where the child was standing, caught her up high above his head with a little laugh, and bringing her down into his arms again, kissed her. Whether Mr. Smallpiece's heart was a trifle more tender than usual just then I cannot say, but it seemed to him that there was something in the movement of the workman very pleasing and pretty. He remembered a time when he was wont to do the same thing to his own child himself.

The child, catching a glimpse of Mr. Smallpiece's bald head shining brightly at the open window, said something to the man who held her, and the latter putting her down upon the ground, led her slowly across the lawn toward the attorney's office.

"Whose brat is that?" said Simon, when they had approached near enough for conversation.

"She is not a brat," replied the man, quickly. "Doesn't she look pretty enough to be called something better than that?"

"Hum," grunted Mr. Smallpiece. "Well, child then. Whose is it? Yours?"

"She's mine now," replied the man, "but I'm not her father. She's my brother's child, sir."

"She seems almighty fond of you," said Simon, "seeing that you're not her natural parent."

"She is fond of me, aint you, Daisy?" rejoined the workman, stooping down to pull her yellow curls through his fingers.

For answer the child put her little round arms about his knee and laid her dimpled cheek close against it.

"Why don't your brother take care of her?" asked Mr. Smallpiece, looking at the little girl a trifle less sourly than he usually looked at people.

"My brother is dead, sir," said the man. "The child has no father but me."

"Where's her mother?"

"Her mother was left very poor," he replied. "She had one little boy besides this

child, and was hardly able to support them both with her unaided hands. She lives a many miles away, sir, and once in a while Daisy and I go down there to see her—on holidays and such like."

"What does she do for a living?"

"She does plain sewing, when she can get it."

"A hard way of earning a living," said Mr. Smallpiece, "very hard. But I dare say she don't work any harder than I do—not a bit, not a bit."

"Perhaps not," said the man, "but she is a woman. I am a bachelor like yourself, sir, and I offered to take this little one and care for her while I lived. I am very glad I did it, for she has made the whole world bright to me—a great deal brighter than it ever was before."

"Bah!" said the lawyer, with a gesture of disgust. "All humbug. I don't want any young ones about me, I can tell you. Those that want 'em can have 'em. I don't."

The man laughed and caught the child up in his arms again.

"She's a pretty child enough," said Simon, looking at her again critically through his glasses. "I've got an apple in my desk here. Do you think she would like it?"

The child held out her fat hands, eagerly.

"Here," said Mr. Smallpiece, taking a red apple out of his drawer and tossing it to the man, who gave it to the little lady in his arms, "now go away quick. I'm very busy."

The man laughed again, and touching his hat withdrew, holding one of the chubby fists in his great brown hand and making believe to bite it, while the child munched the apple which she held in the other.

When they had gone, Mr. Smallpiece leaned back in his chair and reflected upon his unparalleled weakness. What interest had he in children, that he should feel so soft-hearted toward this little one? Was he getting childish in his old age? He did not know. Possibly so. At all events, a new feeling, or rather an old feeling revived, had sprung up in his breast and caused him to look upon his own cynical nature in something of a new light.

The next afternoon the child appeared again upon the step and again did the man toss her high above his head when he met her. Looking across the little green common, the workman recognized the lawyer with a pleasant nod, and then began an uproarious romp upon the soft grass with the child. He

lay down and allowed her to roll over him. He made believe to chase her and then, when she turned upon him, ran away feigning great terror, so that the child's clear laughter rang out into the still afternoon air like a peal of little silvery bells. He went down upon his hands and knees, and, putting the little one on his back, trotted about the lawn, pretending to be a horse, and otherwise conducting himself in a manner so extravagant and ridiculous, and sending his companion into such convulsions of merriment, that Simon Smallpiece, quite before he was aware of it, found himself leaning back in his chair and laughing almost as heartily as they.

"I should like to do that, myself," thought Simon. And although you may not believe it, it is actually true that the old lawyer left his work, and, putting on his hat, quit his office by the back door and walked across the common to join them. To be sure, he took no part in their sport, and only stood under the trees to watch the proceedings, but before he went back to his writing, the child had another great red apple, bigger this time than both her chubby fists together.

And so between these people a sort of half-familiar acquaintance sprang up, which gradually became to Simon Smallpiece so pleasant and agreeable, that at last, whenever the workman and his niece failed to appear on the pleasant afternoons, the lawyer would experience a shade of disappointment. Unconsciously to himself, the attrition with the innocent nature of the child was rubbing off some of the hard protuberances of selfishness and uncharity upon his own character. Somehow he could not think of this little one and his own daughter, who was once a child, too, at the same time (and when one was present in his mind so also was the other), with opposed or differing feelings. When he laughed at the gambols of the workman's niece or pinched her rosy cheeks playfully, he could not find it in his heart to utter his accustomed curse upon the memory of his own child whom he had driven from him years ago. And as one thought led to another, he began to reflect at times when he sat alone in his chamber at night, that it would be a pleasant thing to have a woman's or even a child's presence there, to brighten his declining years and to make him feel more kindly toward the world. But who was there to do for him what the workman's little charge had unconsciously accomplished for her uncle? He had no brother to bequeath

him children. His daughter had found a better shelter than he could give her, although he knew not where it was. She was happy, doubtless, and in her daily thoughts and prayers he never found a place. Yet he could almost have wished to see a little child or two whisking about his room and perhaps calling him grandfather. It would have been pleasant, after all, to have a rosy elf, all smiles and dimples, climbing up into his lap after supper and burying a pair of pink cheeks in his waistcoat. But that, alas, although it might have been, was not to be thought of now.

The summer waned and autumn came in her rustling robes of brown and gold, strewing the grassy space behind the office with a loose carpet of crisp and withered leaves. The intimacy between Simon and the child, extending now even to taking her in his arms and kissing her, had clandestinely smuggled an element of kindness into the lawyer's nature, which had kindled in his heart a warmth which it had not known for very many years. On every sunny afternoon he walked across the common to meet the workman and his niece, and sometimes stooped himself to gather a handful of the rustling leaves with which to playfully cover the child's flaxen curls.

One afternoon he saw the man approaching with a singular, halting gait, as though it were painful for him to walk. The hour was a little earlier than that of his usual return from work, but the child was waiting for him under the trees. As she saw him coming, she clapped her hands with her characteristic little shout and ran toward him. But he did not catch her in his arms as usual, and as he took her hand, put his own great brown one up quickly to his heart and staggered a little unsteadily. Then, without a word, he fell forward suddenly upon the grass.

"My goodness!" said Simon, leaping at once out of the low, open window and running across the common toward them. "Something has happened to the man."

When he reached the spot, the workman lay upon his face, and the child was clinging to him with screams of terror. Several persons who had seen him fall, came quickly up and tried to raise him to his feet, but when they recognized the truth, they laid him back again and tried to unclasp the arms of the little girl.

"It was heart disease," said one, softly.

"Is he dead?" asked Simon, bending over the prostrate form in awe.

"Quite dead," replied the other, who was a neighboring physician. "Is the child his?"

"The child is mine, now," said Mr. Smallpiece, firmly, raising her in his arms. "Will you go with me, my little one?"

"Is the world coming to an end?" asked one of the bystanders, grimly.

"A part of what I have been to the world has already come to an end," replied Simon, pressing his lips to the tear-stained cheek of the little one in his arms. "Take the poor fellow to his house. The child shall go with me."

And he took her home, and locking the office, sat down in his big chair and tried to comfort her. As he held her in his arms, all the feelings of paternity, so long dead within his breast, came suddenly uppermost, and greatly to his own astonishment he found himself doing, without the least awkwardness or embarrassment, the needful things which seemed best to draw her mind away from what had happened. When he had quieted her sobs with cheery stories, he carried her up stairs and fed her royally with bread and milk, even going without his own supper because he would not leave her to go out after the necessary purchases. After it had grown dark he concentrated all his powers upon the problem of undressing her, and so, after breaking most of the hooks and fastening the various strings in the hardest and most vexatious knots, he got her into bed at last, and buried her up to her chin in his own somewhat dilapidated blankets.

Then, and not till then, did he sit down to ponder upon what he should do with her. It was evident that he could not keep her with him as her uncle had done. Why not? Because—well, because he was a stranger to her mother and she would never consent to it. And that led him to think that if her mother was only here, he could perhaps provide a home for her and her children too. He certainly was able to do it, and the loss of the money would never be felt by him as the loss of the child would be. And then, perhaps, the world would remember, after he was gone, that he had done at least one kindly act during his lifetime, and recollecting that, would forgive him many of his more selfish ones. Yes, he would keep the child, and he would help the mother too.

But how was he to get word to her? The workman had told him of the town where she resided, but had never spoken of her by name. He might have asked the child, but

although Simon Smallpiece was an experienced lawyer who usually thought of everything, singularly enough he never thought of this. Ah! now he knew. Where was the paper?

Sitting down at his desk, he headed a sheet of letter paper with the day and year. Then a tiny voice came up from out of the bedclothes, reminding him that something had been forgotten.

"And what is that?" asked Simon.

Dear little heart! She had not said her prayers.

"Did your uncle always want you to say your prayers?" asked the lawyer, going to the bedside.

"Yes, always."

"Then say them for me, little one," said Simon, and kneeling down by her side, the old man rested his scattered gray hairs upon the counterpane while the tiny voice repeated a simple prayer and the chubby hands were fast clasped together. And in that prayer, following her every word, Simon Smallpiece's heart was touched as it never had been touched before, and from his lips there went, with the supplication of the child, an earnest prayer to be made better and more worthy of the charge which had been placed within his keeping.

He returned to his letter at last, and finishing it, directed it to the postmaster of the town in which the object of his search resided, informing him of the fatal event of the afternoon and requesting him, if possible, to forward the information to Daisy's mother. Then he put on his red flannel nightcap, blew out his candle and went to bed, holding the child's hand, as with her he passed to the unknown land of dreams.

The next day passed, and the next. The preparations for the poor man's funeral were simple and few, for he had no friends in the neighborhood where he lived, and little seemed to be known about him. Simon offered to bear the expenses, whatever they might be, and in the afternoon, when the man had been laid in his coffin, took Daisy with him for a farewell look at his peaceful face. But Daisy shrank from the cold and awful form in wild terror, at which the lawyer was glad, for it proved that her love for her former friend would not all be given to him in death as it had been in life, and that there was still room for a little affection for himself, after the workman had been forgotten.

But on the third day, which was the day of

the funeral, there came a knock at the door of the lawyer's office, and there stood upon the threshold a woman, closely veiled and holding a little boy by the hand.

"My husband's brother is buried to-day," she said, a little sadly. "I am told that you have kindly cared for my little girl."

Great heavens! That voice! It seemed to Simon Smallpiece like the peal of a sweet, sweet bell, ringing back to him the sad changes over a half-forgotten world which had fallen from the firmament many long years ago. He arose from his seat trembling with a strange emotion.

"Your little girl is quite safe," he said. "I shall have a proposition to make you in regard to her, after to-day's sad ceremony is over. May I ask your name?"

"I think you know it," she said, raising her veil.

"O Nellie! My daughter Nellie!" cried the old man, falling suddenly down upon his knees before her. "May God forgive me for the wrong I have done you and yours! O my child! Be merciful to me, for I ask your forgiveness at your feet."

"I have nothing to forgive, father," she said, assisting him to his feet. "Whatever there was between us, has been forgiven long ago."

"And you will stay with me now always?" asked Simon, half incredulously.

"Always, if you wish it, father."

"The hand of the Lord is in it," cried he, catching up Daisy in his arms. "It is this little one who has prepared his way, and she has made *my* path straight."

And who shall say that Simon Smallpiece's legacy was not better than gold or silver, since it brought him a new heart?

## MR. SMITH'S TENANT.

BY LOUISE DUPEE.

It was nearly dark, so Mr. Smith ventured to drop a few pennies into the hand of a beggar, without putting his hand behind him as he did so, as was his custom of late, in order to escape detection. Mr. Smith was a benevolent man, but he was also a modest man, and his benevolence was always getting him into print. He regarded himself as a most unfortunate and injured individual, for only the other day, just because he happened to give one of those "subscription women" five dollars, more for the sake of getting rid of her than anything else, he found his name in the *Daily Telegraph*, between a police report and a shocking occurrence; and ever since it had been going the rounds of all the papers in the county. He was in a state of great agitation on the subject. He dared not look a widow or an orphan in the face. He avoided glancing at cripples. He crossed the street, that he need not even pass the charity fair. He frowned on the city missionaries, and closed his eyes on Sunday until the contribution box had passed his pew. He vowed a vow that all his charities hereafter should be kept in as utter secrecy as if they were deadly sins. So the dauntless subscription women did not find him at home, and were searching for him in every direction; and the interesting young ladies who get up fairs for the benefit of poor families, using their smiles for purse-openers, had left his presence of late with very red cheeks, declar-

ing that he was the horriest old bachelor that ever existed.

Mr. Smith was an old bachelor. He was forty-five years old, and was what Mrs. Chalmers, his housekeeper, called "dretful perticklar." An ill-fitting shirt filled his soul with profound melancholy, and it distracted him to have the bread-plate placed on the southeast instead of the northwest corner of the table, which locality it had occupied in the Smith family from time immemorial. He was deeply pathetic on the subject of dirt and small boys, and avoided the acquaintance of affectionate parents. But he was what all the young ladies call fine-looking. He was the possessor of a pair of dark expressive eyes, locks just of the fashionable gray, and a fine commanding figure; and there was a vein of romance in the gentleman's composition, too. He liked music as much as he disliked an unpunctual dinner. The odor of violets thrilled him as it thrills a sentimental youth. He read much poetry, and was always on the eve of being in love. But ever since he was a sophomore in college, and was disenchanted by the dreadful display of a hairpin from which the paint had worn off in his sweetheart's raven braids, some cruel thing had occurred to bring a change o'er the spirit of his dream. Of late all these sweet spells had been broken by the 'fair ones' injudicious praise of his benevolence. There was pretty Eva Goldthalte, who seemed perfec-

tion itself when he first became acquainted with her, and was lovely enough to make her young gentlemen admirers desperate with jealousy on account of her gracious acceptance of his attentions; but she reminded him of his benevolence so often, and with such an appreciative and admiring smile, that at last he rushed from her presence madly, vowing that they must part forever. And so they did. People said that it was a disappointment to Miss Eva, too, and especially to Miss Eva's mamma; for Mr. Smith carried fascinations in his pocket superior to those of his person. Then there was the beautiful Mrs. Twining, a widow with a smile that found a man's heart before he had any idea that he was the owner of such a thing, and a voice as expressively sweet as one of Mendelssohn's songs without words. Mr. Smith commenced to compose a thrilling declaration in his mind on their very first interview, at Mrs. Hale's reception, and found himself in an agony of despair at the mere anticipation of no from those flower-like lips. But alas! that one so fair should be so frail. She raised her eyes to his, full of half-tender half-coquettish meaning. The color deepened slightly on her velvet cheek. The band was playing that delicious waltz of Strauss's, *Tausend Und Eine Nacht*. Mr. Smith dreamily heard the soft notes say, "And we were happy—not a thousand nights but one," and with blissful expectancy waited to hear what was coming.

"I've heard so much of you, Mr. Smith. Indeed, I was acquainted with you long before to-night. I longed to see you. Your benevolence—"

"Indeed!" interrupted Mr. Smith, all the romance dying out of his soul and eyes. "This music is fine, and I am sure you are longing to waltz. There is Mr. Alden in search of you now."

Mr. Smith did not waltz himself, and the beautiful widow had assured him that she liked conversation so much better.

She bit her lip with vexation. Mr. Smith repaired to the balcony to steady his nerves under the cool starlight. He heard her voice from within, and thought how like "sweet bells jangled, harsh and out of tune" it was. Since then, whenever Mr. Smith found himself admiring a lovely mouth or a sweet voice, the word *benevolence* would echo in his mind, and he was

disenchanted at once. But on the night of which I write he felt unusually lonely, and a little sentimental, as he made his way toward his great empty house after the day's business was over. Perhaps it was because it was growing towards spring, when a "young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love;" perhaps it was because he had caught the odor of violets from the open door of the florist's; perhaps it was because an organ-grinder was playing "Believe me, if all those endearing young charms;" and perhaps it was a presentiment. But all the way home he was haunted by the vision of a fair face, a little more womanly than that of Eva Goldthaitte, blonde, but not dark and brilliant like that of Mrs. Twining, and a mouth never disfigured by speaking the word *benevolence*. Mr. Smith had a vivid imagination. It painted this face carefully but strongly, it gave the lovely lips a voice. The voice was consenting to be his wife; and at last, through its lively aid, he was actually kissing the charming Mrs. Smith, who was admired prodigiously, but never smiled a hair's breadth too widely on his gentlemen friends. Going up the steps of the dark Smith mansion, the lovely vision vanished with cruel haste. "O, what would it be to have an eye to mark my coming, and look brighter when I came!" he said, half aloud, as he searched for his latchkey.

And as if in answer to his longing, the one eye of his housekeeper appeared at the door, looking unusually bright indeed. She was anxious, for it was just dinner-time, and there was a lady waiting to see Mr. Smith.

"Who is the lady?" asked Mr. Smith, in answer to her information.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Chalmers. "She said she came on business, and would only detain you a few moments."

"Then why did she come at this hour? It is dinner-time, and I attend to business at my office, not here," grumbled Mr. Smith. And he entered the room where she was waiting, with a very unpromising face.

A little lady came forward, murmuring a few words of apology. The light was in her face as she turned. It was very like the face of Mr. Smith's imagination—the same soft brown eyes, the same golden hair, and the same beautiful mouth which

he was almost sure, though he trembled with a little doubt, *could* not utter that ugly word—benevolence.

"Ah!" said Mr. Smith, in answer to some inward thought, as he abstractedly heard what the lady had to say. For the first time in his life he forgot that it was dinner-time. He had taken his meals by rule when he was a baby.

It was a long time before he fairly understood the object of her visit; but at last the lady's look of surprise brought him to his senses, and he begged her pardon somewhat confusedly.

"Your agent said that you would probably make the alterations of which I speak," she was saying; "and if you will do so, I should like very much to have the house."

"What, that little house on Brier Street! You don't mean that?" he said, hastily. "I don't think it would suit you at all. It is very small, and the location isn't at all desirable."

"I know that the location isn't very desirable, but we cannot afford to be fastidious," she said, with an air of quiet dignity; but a quick sensitive blush stole into her cheek, and Mr. Smith was both distressed and embarrassed.

"Poor little thing!" he thought. "She would grace a palace." And it was quite dreadful for him to imagine her living on Brier Street, even though it were only for a little while. He wondered how soon he should dare to ask her to become Mrs. Smith. Then, for the first time it occurred to him that she might possibly be married, already, was probably married already, else why should she be keeping house? The thought overcame him, and he leaned back in his chair quite pale and dejected. He ventured on this, that he might be relieved from suspense. He must know the worst at once.

"Certainly, if you think you will like the house, I shall be delighted to make whatever repairs either you or your husband may suggest."

"Thank you; I am a widow; my mother lives with me, and I have one little boy. I do not think any other repairs are needed. Are you particular about having the rent paid in advance?"

"O, that makes no difference whatever. Pay as it pleases you." And Mr. Smith was radiant again. The possession of a

small boy might have detracted greatly from the charms of other women in the eyes of this fastidious gentleman, but as far as this one was concerned, it only caused a fleeting shadow of sadness, and the sudden hope that the small boy did not always have sticky hands, or an unconquerable passion for popguns.

"Thornton is a better name than Smith," he sighed, reading the card which she had left in his hand. He had assisted her into a street car, and returned to the drawing-room. Mrs. Chalmers had twice given him notice that dinner was served, but he still stood abstractedly in the middle of the floor. The meats were growing cold, and she was beginning to fear that he was growing insane. Something had come over him; certainly.

The next day there were great doings in the little house on Brier Street. The ugly old wooden mantel-pieces were torn away, and marble slabs, on brackets of the most artistic designs, were set in their places. Paper-hangers and painters were doing wonders in making over the dingy little rooms; bright new blinds surprised the whole neighborhood, and Mr. Smith superintended everything himself, getting into a perfect fever of uncertainty over the tints for the walls.

"What is in the wind?" said the wondering workmen; for certainly no Brier Street tenant was ever thus favored before.

Brier Street was a sort of lane, just on the edge of the city, crossed and recrossed by railroad tracks, and in the immediate vicinity of duck ponds. A row of cottages dreadfully alike sat staring at each other from either side, and the loud-voiced wives of the mechanics who dwelt therein quarrelled with each other over clothes-line privileges, and the dream-disturbing voices of one's roosters, and the trespasses of another's ducks. Mr. Smith shuddered at the thought that his divinity was going to dwell among such women as these; but it would not be for long, hope told him over and over again, as he surveyed his work when completed. Then the thought struck him that he had been rather rash in his improvements. What a fine opportunity it would give the lady to speak of his benevolence! Might she not say, in the first flush of her surprise and pleasure, spilling that sweet thrilling voice of hers, and breaking the spell which

bound him so blissfully forever, "Ab, Mr. Smith, I have heard much of your benevolence, but in this case you are really too kind!"

No, no indeed, she would not say anything of the kind; she was too wellbred. She would accept it with lady-like grace, thanking him not too warmly, but in just the right manner, with just the right words. And Mr. Smith reproached that troublesome imagination of his for suggesting such an unhappy chance.

It came about that she did not thank him half warmly enough. She seemed somewhat troubled, as well as surprised, at the transformation which the little house had undergone, and looked at the embarrassed Mr. Smith as if she thought he were not perfectly sound as to his mind. Her eyes did brighten, though, and she laughed with a real childish delight, as she went from room to room, and he heard her exclaiming to her mother over the prettiness of the tinting.

As soon as the little family were fairly settled in their new abode, Mr. Smith found an excuse for calling. It was a business call, to be sure, but he lingered a good while after the business had been disposed of, to talk about Mrs. Thornton's plants, and inquire, very sympathetically, concerning her mother's rheumatism. He even condescended to be gracious to Master Harry, a curly-haired young gentleman of five, who filled the pauses in the conversation by the energetic beating of a drum. For the sake of the boy's mother, he would have smiled even in the immediate vicinity of his Fourth of July. If Mrs. Thornton had been charming at their first interview, she was perfectly irresistible now. She was small, but she moved about the room with the air of a queen. Her figure was perfection, in a perfectly plain but dainty gray gown; her manner was a charming mixture of elegance and simplicity, and all the arrangements of the room were suggestive of a refined and cultivated taste. She was busied over some liken embroidery, and as Mr. Smith watched her pretty fingers, the whole of his heart was lost hopelessly and forever. He felt that it was so, and grew hot and cold with doubts and fears. After that his chief occupation for many a day was devising some plan, trying to make some errand which should take him at once to

the abode of his fair one. A week or two passed while he was thus engaged, and at last he made up his mind that he would go and make a friendly call, without making any pretence whatever. Mr. Smith was a man of the world, used to society, and not accustomed to be ill at ease in the presence of fine ladies; and though he was a modest man, he had been courted and flattered to such an extent that he could not help knowing that he was at least not disagreeable to the fair sex generally. But now that he was really in love, he was seized with a sudden fit of bashfulness. He was oppressed by doubts, cast down by a sense of unworthiness, and he dreaded his little lady's questioning eyes, and the surprise which he was sure would greet him at number seven Brier Street. The mistress of the house was not inclined to be overgracious to him, and he stood far more in awe of her, clad as she was in her common gray gown, with no ornament save a small bow of ribbon at the throat, than of any of his velvet and satin lady friends.

He did find the inquiry in her eyes, but it only remained there an instant. She received him in a quiet matter-of-course way, asked to be excused if she kept on with her embroidery, as it must be finished and sent to the store that night; and talked with him freely enough in a very bright original way. She wasn't reserved, but somehow she kept one terribly at a distance. Mr. Smith felt a little unhappy, in spite of everything.

"There's no danger of her accusing me of benevolence," he said to himself, half bitterly; and he dared not ask her to go to a concert with him, as he had at first intended to do in the headlong haste of his passionate love. She liked music, played on the guitar, and, he was sure, sang like an angel. But he ventured to send her a bouquet the next day, and it was not refused; which circumstance gave him courage to make another call in a very short space of time. She confessed that she had no friends in town, and was very lonely. Mr. Smith feared that that was the only reason for her smiles being so bright for him, but he kept on sending her bouquets and books, kept on calling, kept on hoping and fearing, and watching for some little sign that his passion was returned. But since the first week of their acquaintance there had not been the

slightest change in her manner. She smiled on him when he came with just the same degree of warmth; she talked, and laughed, and embroidered with the same elegant indifference. Sometimes she condescended to sing to him, but there was no passion in her voice, save when she sang some old song of sorrow or regret. Mr. Smith was in a state of dreadful anxiety, and one mellow June day, when the blue sky, and sunshine, and silvery water in the distance were making something beautiful even out of Brier Street, he walked impatiently towards number seven, determined to know his fate within one hour. But while he paused for a moment under his lady's window, a sight met his eyes which caused him to stagger back and lean against the wall, quite faint with horror and despair. There was the object of his love closely clasped in the arms of a bearded stranger, who was covering her beaming face with kisses. As soon as he was able to do so, he hastily retraced his steps, and the very next day rushed off to Europe. A European tour is almost as popular a recipe as drowning for unrequited affection, and poor Mr. Smith, in the suddenness of his despair, seized upon this as his only refuge from absolute insanity.

A year passed. He had wandered restlessly through the various cities of the old world, but instead of finding forgetfulness amid these new scenes, it seemed as if his sorrow grew keener every day. "Ah, if she had only said benevolence to me, and cured me of my folly at first!" he said to himself, bitterly, one rainy night in Paris. Then, for the first time in all that year, it occurred to him that there might still be a little hope. Might not this affectionate stranger have been some near relative,

after all? What an idiot he had been to take things so for granted, without trying to find out the truth. He wrote immediately home to his agent, "Does Mrs. Thornton still occupy the Brier Street house?"

He received this in return: "No. Mrs. Thornton's brother suddenly appeared from Africa, with his pockets full of diamonds, and took her away to be mistress of a fashionable house down town. She's been all the rage in fashionable life this winter—and by the way, her brother, a fine, handsome young fellow, is going to marry your old friend Eva Goldthalte."

Mr. Smith hastened home. Trembling with both fear and eagerness, he sought Mrs. Thornton's presence. There was a slight shade of coldness in her manner, but he would not heed it. Before she had hardly time to say how do you do, he was pouring forth the whole story of his love for her, telling her why he had left the country so abruptly, and how he could not cure himself of his love, could not forget her for one moment.

She listened calmly at first, then burst into a perfect flood of tears. "You were cruel to leave me so," she said, "for I loved you all the time."

They were married very soon, and Mr. Smith, the happiest man in the country, grows less "perticklar" every day. He very often forgets that it is dinner-time under the influence of Mrs. Smith's smiles. He has popguns fired in his very ears with the coolest indifference, but he is still sure that that lady's greatest hold on his affections is that she has never once in their whole acquaintance hinted that she has ever heard, or that she thinks him, "benevolent."

## MY LOVE STORY.

BY EVELYN SOMEES.

### TO CELESTE.

You asked me to tell you my love-story, Celeste, last night, when you had told me your own, hiding your blushes on my bosom, and thrilling through all your being with that richest wine of life—"Love's young dream." It is nectar that can be drunk but once, darling—drain the chalice slowly. It is sometimes Heaven's own sacrament. Thank God for it.

My parents were of the strictest sect of Orthodox Christians, and held cold and somewhat puritanic views of life. They instructed me early of the deceit and wickedness of mankind. I think I embraced too readily the lessons of distrust and suspicion. At fifteen I was sent to my aunt's to attend school at the B— Seminary.

They lived quite out of the village, in a bright sunny place, in a pale yellow cottage house with a little garden in front. Below was a stretch of meadow, with a thread of silver streamlet, that wooed wild flowers, and murmured under a little rustic bridge. Opposite was a white cottage with a garden of miniature magnificence, whose odors of spicy pinks, waving lilacs, and sweet June roses, seem to breathe their perfumes over me still.

My aunt had been a wild gay creature when a girl; ardent and impetuous, easily swayed, and narrowly escaping the temptations and pitfalls of a too Southern temperament, flirting away all worthy and honest lovers. Finding herself suddenly stranded upon the sands of thirty, she repented of her gayety, joined the church, married

a Methodist, and became as ardent a saint as she had been a sinner. Her own experience led her to assume a peculiar sphere of duty, which she pursued with all the zeal of a Luther. It was to watch over the ways of all young maidens that came within her care, to keep them out of the paths wherein she had well-nigh slipped—never thinking that the fault was in her own feet, rather than in the roseate paths of girlhood. My parents had great confidence in her judgment, and confided me to her care, with a sense of security that I would be guarded from the wolves and hyenas of life. I have often thought since of wolves in sheep's clothing. Yet I loved my Aunt Jane, and had an earnest desire to be as good and saintly as she.

I would sit in the garden at twilight, and sing songs to my guitar, though I knew she would shake her head and sigh, and ask me how I could expect to be a Christian as long as I indulged in such vanities. There was better music in the hymn-book than "Allan-Water," and "Coming through the Rye." So in penance I had to bring my guitar and sing with her, "Hark from the Tombs," and "St. Martin's." In vain I urged that such tunes were too slow for the guitar. But she assured me it sounded far better than quick music. And she hunted up some verses that I could sing to the tune of "Robin Adair." "When shall I see the day that ends my woes?" mentally I said. "Soon I hope."

At the seminary, I had a seat next to a thoughtful-looking young man, whose only

claims to beauty were a well-built frame, a pure healthy complexion and expression of open truth and honor; and, indeed, there can be no type of manly beauty without these, Celeste. One day I was in disgrace about my algebra, and he kindly passed his slate with the problem solved in the neatest and most elegant figures I ever saw, and on the margin of the slate was printed in old English letters the name of "Grenville Deane." This will seem very simple to you, Celeste, if you never had a schoolgirl romance, but to me it is full of a delicious fragrance that mingles with the breath of pinks and roses in the garden opposite.

That evening I sat on the doorstep playing and singing "My Heart and Lute," when the garden gate opposite unclosed, and Grenville Deane came across the street to the garden gate where I was sitting, and with a shy smile of greeting offered me two or three sprays of lilies of the valley.

"Do you live there?" I asked, blushing vividly, at the thought of his thinking I was singing on purpose for him to hear.

"Yes; and now will you not sing for me?"

"I don't sing well enough."

"But I think you do. Sing 'Midnight Hour.'"

"With you?"

"Well."

So we sang together in the twilight, and so quietly and sweetly began my heart to dream the lotus dream of love. Presently Aunt Jane opened the door and said:

"Good-evening, Grenville," in a sharp wiry tone, that seemed to say, "What are you here for?" and bade me come in.

I felt that I had done something very wrong, though I could not tell what.

Aunt Jane wrote to my mother:

"Mary does very well, but is too fond of attracting the attention of young men—a propensity I do not like to see. I shall try to do my duty by her."

I will do my parents justice to say they were too pure and noble to suspect guile in every innocent demonstration of a young maiden. Such degrading suspicions could only come from a depraved heart. They did not know what I had done. They only knew that I had committed some indiscretion which had grieved my aunt and called for her censure. Consequently, I received a letter of fourteen pages full of sorrow and disappointment at my conduct, and

rehearsing the careful admonitions I had received. I was dumb with amazement, and carried the letter to Aunt Jane.

"What does all this mean? What have I done?"

"Do you think any modest girl would sit on the doorsteps night after night singing, to attract the notice of young men, and call them to see her?"

My aunt was shocked.

"I didn't know anybody could hear me. I didn't know he lived there."

But the look of pious incredulity on her face showed me that she only thought I was adding falsehood to my indiscretions. I felt like a bird in a net—helpless and fluttering. I was convinced that I was very bold and very naughty, and so I avoided my neighbor in every possible manner, while he sought every opportunity to be near me, and would lie in wait for me coming from school. Then I knew the Argus eyes of Aunt Jane were upon me, and I felt that I had committed unpardonable sins.

I did not know I loved him then. I did not even dream he cared for me. If I thought him attentive, I instantly thought of the deceit and wiles of mankind, as my parents had taught me. Yet I missed him when he was not in the schoolroom the moment I entered, but I missed no other; and if he were absent half a day, the house seemed dark, and desolate, and lonely, and only brightened when he appeared.

The last day of the term arrived. It vaguely seemed like the last day of my life. Our class had presented the teacher with a gold watch, and had received an invitation to spend an hour at his house in the evening. Grenville insisted upon accompanying me home. It was the first time my hand had touched him, as it lay on his arm, the first time I ever felt his breath upon my brow.

Ah, Celeste, young as I was, I had all the perfect nature of a true, constant and loving woman. The round moon was coming up out of the east. We paused at the gate. He pressed my arm a little closer, and said:

"Let us go down to the brook, May. It's the last time I shall see you—perhaps forever."

"Perhaps forever." The words lay like ice on my heart.

"Are you sorry?" he urged, as I did not speak, but suffered him to lead me on.

"It has been very pleasant." I said it

in a careless way, wondering if he could feel my heart's throbbing.

We sat down by the stream, and cowslips and violets opened their eyes to smile on us. The stars looked down sweetly through the blue. The stream sung on, the song that was in our hearts. All nature seemed to bless us.

"Let us stay here always, May," he said, playing with my passive fingers, but not frightening me by clasping them too tightly.

I laughed and answered:

"What would Aunt Jane say?"

Looking up into his eyes, as I replied, I saw that his thoughts were not on his lips. There was no resisting that magnetic gaze, that took from me all power to repulse the fond movement with which his arms enfolded me, and he pressed his beardless lip to my cheek, in the innocent and earnest fervor of first young love. The scalding crimson went over my brow. I could hear my own heart beat. I was angry with myself that I had given him the opportunity to take such freedom—for I remembered the early lessons of man's perfidy—but I forgot to withdraw my hand from the caressing clasp with which he held it between both his own, tenderly and softly as he might have held a nestling robin. I was the first to rise to return, and we went back in silence. He went through the gate, under the shadow of the doorway, clasped my hand, and said:

"Good-by, May. Shall I write to you?"

"Well—yes—I suppose so—if you wish."

Then he broke out in a little impatient passion!

"Don't go, May. I can't bear to have you go."

I smiled back at his boyish speech, and suggested that I had nothing to stay for. But that strong magnetic look caught my heart again in its power, and I could no more resist it than with my puny arm stay the Alpine avalanche. He clasped me closely to his heart, kissed my lips, and with a hasty good-by left me in a moment.

I stamped my feet in rage and passion—not at him, but at myself, that I could be duped and insulted. I did not know it was the omnipotent hand of Love that grasped me like a Fate. I said to my heart, "I will not love him. I am not old enough to love any one." So I strove to crush it out, root it up, tear it out of my being. I felt the wretchedness that unrequited love must

bring, and shrank from it. I saw how easy it was for me to make him my idol, and yet he might forget me to-morrow, while I could never, never, never forget that he had kissed me.

I went home, and he wrote to me—letters my father and mother insisted upon seeing. There was nothing they might not see—he was careful not to commit himself.

"May," "My Friend," "Sister May," were the fondest terms with which he addressed me. I boldly declared to myself each day I did not love him; but at night one of those daintily written letters always slept under my cheek.

The correspondence waned. Few and far between the letters. I did not care—not I. I never cared for him. Once I saw him. I was very gay. So was he. I snatched a letter out of his pocket—with a delicate girlish superscription. He seemed alarmed, and took it rudely from me.

"You can't read that, May."

I was very rude. But O the blow to me. I never had a letter he might not have seen. It was all true, then, the rumors of his flirtation with Louise. Well, I never cared for him. O Celeste, Celeste. Love is omnipotent. No one knew how my pillow was nightly drenched with tears of the bitterest anguish.

He wrote once more, a short letter beginning "Friend May." I resolved to bring this cruel uncertainty to an end. I had suffered him to kiss my lips. No woman, pure and guileless, ever yields the treasures of her lips, where she would not gladly give her hand, her life itself. You know this, Celeste. So I wrote him an equivocal letter, asking if the correspondence had not become irksome; if we were not getting too old to be childish, and left it with him to do as he liked about sending back my letters.

I was foolish enough to think he might say I was too dear to him. But he did not. He sent them all back to me, the foolish little notes, struggling between all my girlish affection and reserve, that told so plainly how inexpressibly dear he was to me. My eyes were heavy in the mornings, after that.

I went to B—, to the exhibition the next spring, two years from the time we went to the little brook together. He was there, stouter, handsomer—admired by all.

Did I ever tell you of Sara, Celeste?

She has been my bosom friend. Full of rich vitality, I leaned on her strength, and admired her common sense. I visited her instead of my aunt. She only guessed the constancy of my love, and folding me in her arms, in her own bed, she told me how unworthy he was of the true unswerving devotion I had given him; how he had wooed the fragile Louise—taking her on all the excursions, to "Lover's Leap," "Cozy Nook," "The Fort"—holding her in his arms for hours by the brookside.

"Every one knew of it," she said. "I do not think he is engaged to her. It's only a summer flirtation. But, Mamie, you do not have summer flirtations. If he ever kissed you, your lips have kept his kisses sacred. No other ever dared to kiss you."

"Never, Sara."

"Is he worthy of you? Even if you could win him back?"

"I do not wish to."

I wept on her kind motherly heart, and buried my love deep in the ashes of the past.

On the next evening we were at a reunion of old schoolmates. It was a merry affair. Louise was there, but she had another admirer, and Grenville was devoted to me. They asked me to sing. I took up my guitar and sung:

"The last link is broken."

I saw a dark shadow as of pain on his brow. I was kind to him, exactly as to others. He had no power over me again—forever. He could never suffer the long days and nights of grief and pain that I had suffered. He would never know of them until the gates of eternity unfolded to our view.

I was not romantic enough not to love again, Celeste, as you well know, and the full perfect love that sought me made my heart glad again. Not with the tender blushing shame of early girlhood, but the maturer womanly joy of wedded happiness—a dear friend to be always near, and sweet prattling lips call me mother.

Richard is all the world to me, all that he could ever have been, had he been true. I am happier than I ever thought I could be, for I love and am beloved—and who shall say that Heaven has higher joys?

Ten years have passed since then, Celeste. I am growing old. I met Grenville Deane the other day. He was never so cordial, so frank and friendly before. He told me then that he had loved me. No other face came out of the past half so sweet to him as mine. No other memories so dear and tender as the shy sweet meetings of the long ago. I remembered that he never told me before that he loved me. I wondered if men ever can love as women do; but I thought of Richard. It seemed to me that the strong abiding love of manhood only comes with maturer years, while woman's love is faithful forever.

I told Richard all about it, and said:

"I hope you'll not be jealous, dear."

He kissed me.

Yet the lilies of the valley have a power to set me dreaming; and my old worn guitar seems sentient with those olden melodies. But I love my Richard, and because he loves me I am glad it all happened so. One never marries her first love you know. Heigh-ho. Good-night, dear. Richard is at the gate, calling to me.

## MY PATRIMONY.

BY MRS. R. B. EDSON.

It had been bequeathed to me in my grandfather's will when I was little more than a baby. My grandfather had married a young girl after his own sons and daughters had families about them, and there was a coldness between father and children from that time. Then in his old age another child was born to him; a fair delicate little thing, which crept into the old man's heart as no other child had ever done, until love grew into positive idolatry, and then God took her.

I think this softened the hearts of the other children, for at my birth, which happened soon after, I was named Dilly, the name *she* had borne, making it, to my grandfather, at least, the sweetest name in all the world. In less than two years from this time my grandfather died also, and to the surprise of all the family, "Willow-Brook Farm" was bequeathed to me.

The years had come and gone, bringing many and grave changes, but, gravest and saddest of all, I was left fatherless. My mother was one of those pretty, gentle, fragile women who are constitutionally dependent. She made our home fair and sweet by all the tender charms of grace, and beauty, and affection. It was enough for twenty long happy years—years when my father's strong arm and brave heart bore the brunt of life for us all. But when that failed, she, too, failed. I do not say this in blame, but my heart bleeds even now when I think of that terrible year of struggle, when, to shield her, at the cost of his own life, my father fought that fearful hand-to-hand conflict with death, facing the foe bravely, even to the moment when the crimson lifeblood covered his breast.

It was in the chill twilight of a raw March day that we came to Willow-Brook Farm—I mean that we came to take possession. There were four of us: my mother, Alice, Harry and myself. I do not think we had any definite object in coming here; it was because it was the only thing we could do. It was a home and a shelter, at least, and that was something.

The house set in from the road, and was

reached by a narrow lane, one side of which was bordered by a shallow brook, half hidden by a thick undergrowth of willows. The little bridge at the foot of the lane was half rotted away, and a general aspect of neglect and decay brooded over the place.

"O Dilly!" my mother cried, hysterically, as we were driven up the lane in the ghostly uncertain light, "why have you brought us to this dreadful place? Let us go back, children. Dilly, ask the man to drive us back!"

I put my arm about my mother's slight figure. She was trembling like one in an ague. The man who was driving cast a curious glance back at us, and I saw him smile faintly. I was angry that he should discover our secrets. What business was it of his? And yet I was silly enough to seek to excuse my poor mother.

"She is ill and weak," I said, in an undertone, as he lifted me out in his strong arms, as if I were a baby.

"Yes, I see," he replied, laconically.

"Indeed! I congratulate you upon your powers of observation!" I replied, stiffly.

"Thank you!" he said, nonchalantly, with another of those faint smiles.

Just at this moment the great oaken door, with its ponderous brass knocker, swung open, and Tom Allen's cheery laugh greeted us like a benediction. Tom had been my father's best friend, proving the sincerity of his friendship by helping and advising his dear ones when he could do it no longer. It was he who had strengthened my resolution to come to Willow-Brook when I wavered under my mother's and Alice's opposition. It was he, also, who had come out before us with his energetic little wife, and "set our house in order."

"Come right in, Mrs. Clifton," he said, cheerily, tucking my mother under his arm, and looking back over his shoulder at the rest of us. "Molly and I are all ready for company!" And he laughed such a genial heartsome laugh that I hardly knew which was brightest, it or the broad flood of soft firelight that poured through the

open door at the end of the great hall. I only know that together they completely chased away the gloom which had enveloped us a moment before; and even my mother smiled as she looked in our friend's jolly and kindly face.

I bethought me, all at once, and stepped back. I had not paid the man for driving us over from Acton Centre, some four miles. He was just turning the horse when I ran down the path, feeling vexed at myself for my forgetfulness, and thinking it would give him a chance to laugh at me again in his cool annoying way.

"Sir," I said, in what I see now must have been a ludicrously dignified manner, "you will please give me your price for driving us from the station."

"But if I do not please—what then?" he asked, deliberately getting into the wagon and taking up the reins.

"But I insist upon paying you!" I said, hotly.

"Ah? I'm sorry, then, but I am afraid I cannot gratify you. I did not bring you for pay. Good-night, Miss Clifton." And giving his horse a sharp cut with the whip, he rode down the lane and out of sight before I had fairly mastered my surprise, and, I will confess, indignation.

"Tom," I exclaimed, coming into the room where the family were gathered (we all called him Tom, he would have it so), "who is that fellow?"

Tom stopped and gazed at my flushed face with a slightly-puzzled expression, which almost instantly broadened into a laugh, I knew, at my perturbed look.

"O, you mean Cleaveland? I fancy you wouldn't call him 'that fellow' if you knew him better." Dilly, John Cleaveland is one of nature's noblemen. I have known him ever since he was a mere baby, and I never knew him do a mean or ungenerous thing. What is the indictment against him, my girl?" And he came and looked straight in my eyes, an unusual seriousness in his own.

"He's a disagreeable, impertinent person!" I said; shortly, vexed that Tom should praise him so warmly. "And—and he said he 'didn't drive us here for pay,' and called me 'Miss Clifton'—as if I were an old and particular friend?"

The way Tom Allen laughed is altogether indescribable. There was always something peculiarly infectious about Tom's

laughter, and on looking up I saw that every one was laughing also. It was no use. I gave in and joined the general chorus, though in my secret heart I was angrier than ever with the cause of it all—John Cleaveland—and disliked him more than ever.

I can see it now, the bright quaint picture that flashed upon me, as, recovering my composure, I stood and looked about me. The great open chimney was one glowing mass of rosy flame, that, like a brilliant sunset, dyed with its own rare splendor everything it touched. The floor was bare and snowy white, and was worn here and there by the tread of feet that had been dust for many long, long years. The low-ceiled walls stretched away into—it seemed—illimitable space, and narrow curiously-panelled doors opened in all directions. The walls had been blue originally, but time had dimmed and faded them, till, in the soft firelight, there was about them a sort of pale halo, like the soft flush of a summer dawn against the cool azure of the firmament. My mother's fair face took on the bloom of youth in this rare light; and even the strange pallor that had of late given me such a sad sinking of the heart whenever I looked at Harry's thoughtful young face, seemed to have banished like some painful dream.

"O Dilly, this is beautiful!" Harry said, softly, touching my hand in a pretty caressing way he had. "I am afraid, though, it will make me want to stay more," he added, dreamily, as if to himself.

My heart gave a fierce throb, but I put the unwelcome thought away from me with a resolute hand. I could not have it so—I would not! Harry was so young—only fifteen, and country air and country living would make him strong immediately, I was sure—at least I tried to persuade myself that I was.

The next morning, before any of the family had arisen, I went over the house, and the nearer portions of the farm with Tom Allen. Alas! the beautiful glamour of the rosy firelight had faded and vanished, and under the gray gusty skies my "patrimony" looked little enough like Eden, I must confess. Tom pushed back the great barn doors, and I looked in. It was "empty, swept and garnished."

"I must have something to put in here, Tom," I said, in a tone of desperation;

"I must! What can I get the cheapest?"

"Well, cats, perhaps," he replied, with ludicrous gravity. "I shouldn't wonder if for five dollars you could stock the old concern pretty well."

I knew the good fellow was trying to divert my mind from the general dreariness and desolation that pervaded the place, and inwardly thanked him the while I made a pretence of anger. After this we held a long consultation, the result of which was that before noon there were a cow, half a dozen hens, and the smallest atom of a pig, fairly domiciled in the old barn; and Harry and I, at least, were in a pleasant state of excitement over the matter. There was a delightful sense of ownership about our new possessions that was altogether novel and charming. We could not do enough for them, and to this day it is a perfect marvel to me how that small morsel of a pig could have held all we managed to put into him.

But it was not till Tom Allen and his good wife had gone back to their home that a full sense of the care, and toil, and responsibility of our new life came upon me. It looked a rather hopeless experiment, I knew; but when one has no choice, what is one to do? My mother was utterly despondent, and Alice angry at me for "getting us out here," as she called it. Harry stood by me bravely, and we two resolved ourselves into a committee of "ways and means," the result of which was that I decided to apply for the school at Acton Centre.

"It's what the heroine of a story invariably does," Harry said, by way of recommendation.

"Or else goes out as governess," I added, laughing, "where there is an irresistible father, surrounded by nine small children, who, alas! are motherless."

We decided to say nothing about the matter to mother or Alice at present, and if I was unsuccessful, as I very much expected to be, we promised each other never to mention it at all. I do not think that I had the faintest idea that I should secure the school, and yet I went on planning the expenditure of my salary with a coolness and deliberateness that was altogether amazing.

I sent in my name to the committee, and was notified to appear for examination on either the seventeenth or eighteenth day

of April. I chose the former, to have it the sooner over, for, with all my powers of self-control, I found myself getting suspiciously nervous, and I had a morbid fear that my mother or Alice would discover my purpose, and raise a storm of opposition about my ears.

How distinctly I remember, even to the minutest detail, everything which occurred that morning! The most commonplace and trivial things seem cut into my memory with sharp ineffaceable lines that the years do not touch. I had been politic enough to discover from time to time certain little articles needed at the Centre; and so, when I proposed carelessly, as I cleared away the breakfast-table, to go to the village, my mother at once declared that I "couldn't have a better time," and she was glad I could "think of something besides this dismal old place."

It was a lovely morning, one of April's fairest and brightest children. The softly-rounded hills, flushed faintly with tender green; the quiet stirless river, over which hovered a tremulous fleecy mist, through which gleamed the lithe-limbed willows, showing goldenly green in the slant sunlight; and over all the soft delicious sunshine, melting into the fathomless blue of the bending heavens, were enough to stir the blood and quicken the pulses of a far less susceptible nature than mine. I walked on in a sort of transport of feeling, till the hoarse rattle of the coach that carried passengers from the outlying districts to the Centre, broke in upon my consciousness, warning me that my delightful reverie was at an end.

Once fairly inside the coach, all my nervousness returned, and a curious feeling of giddiness took possession of me. I felt as if I were swinging in measureless space, with neither foothold nor support. I was vaguely conscious that there were other passengers, but I had not the faintest interest in them, and did not even glance at them; and not until some one pronounced my name, in a clear deep voice, as I alighted at the house of one of the committee, where I had been directed, do I think I really saw one of my fellow-passengers.

I hardly know whether I felt most pleased or vexed when I looked up and met the cool gray eyes of John Cleaveland quietly regarding me, as he assisted me from the coach. I think there was a faint

feeling of relief, curiously mingled with a vague sense of annoyance. I had seen him at church, and had twice met him in the street, but he had not spoken to me since the night he brought me to Willow-Brook, till now. As he preceded me up the long cobble-stone walk to the front door, he glanced back over his shoulder and smiled that terribly-provoking smile again.

"I hardly think you will be drawn and quartered, Miss Clifton," he said, I thought, contemptuously.

I felt the hot indignant blood flood my face. What right had he to notice my weakness and comment on it in this impertinent way? I do not think I was ever so thoroughly angry in my life as I was at this moment with John Cleaveland. It roused me completely, and I made a sudden inward vow that I *would* succeed, if for no other purpose than to let this man, who had taken it upon himself to criticise me, see that I was not the weak inefficient creature he thought me.

We went up the steps in silence, and my companion rang the bell. The door opened noiselessly, and he stood aside for me to enter. I bowed coldly, without looking up, and went in, he following me. It flashed upon me all at once that this John Cleaveland was one of the "committee."

We were ushered into a great ghostly room, smelling of damp and must. A line of straight high-backed chairs was drawn up against the wall, and four of them were occupied by "candidates." I think they were the most thoroughly frightened-looking quartet I ever beheld. I will also be candid enough to confess that only my temper kept me from outdoing the rest in that respect.

The committee, three in number, sat in the centre of the room beside a great square balze-covered table, on which were piled half a dozen formidable-looking books, with writing materials beside them.

The examination began, not of each separately, as I had supposed, but of all together as a class, the committee taking turns in asking questions. I shall never forget the chairman of that committee. He was supernaturally tall and thin, with a closely-shaven face, and overhanging brows of dusky blackness, from under which looked out a pair of keen alert eyes, that had a habit of growing as he gazed at

one into two bright and terribly distinct interrogation points. It was the Rev. Simon Appleton, of the Acton First Parish, as I afterward learned.

This gentleman informed us that there were four more applicants, and when all had had a hearing, the one who, in the opinion of the committee, had passed the most satisfactory examination, would be immediately notified. There was nothing more to be said, and one by one we arose and glided out, like a procession of unshrived ghosts.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed one of the number, as we gained the street, "the long agony is over. Talk about the Inquisition and the Council of Ten! They needn't take the trouble to 'notify' me. I wouldn't live in daily dread of a visit from that 'committee' to save the whole rising generation from utter barbarism! Count me out, girls." And, with a nod to the others and a little ripple of gay laughter, she ran lightly across the street, and into a bit of a brown cottage whose windows were all aglow with scarlet geraniums and white and purple petunias.

Two days afterward I received a letter from the Rev. Mr. Appleton, wherein he informed me, very briefly, that I was the successful candidate for the post of teacher in the Acton Centre Intermediate School, and I would please hold myself in readiness to enter on my duties the second week in May.

With the letter in my hand, I sought my mother and sister, and communicated its contents. Of course I was blamed and upbraided for the course I had taken. Mother was sure there was no necessity for such a step. Hadn't we a thousand dollars in the bank, which we could draw upon if necessary? And then, what did I know about teaching school? Besides, it was so far away, and it would make me ill, and then what would become of us?

Here she broke down and cried, and wished we had stayed in the city with our friends, as they had asked us; it would have been so much easier and pleasanter. We never could make anything of "this old place," and the sooner we gave it up and went back the better.

"But, mother," I said, resolutely, "I am not going to give it up at all. Mr. Gordon says that in my grandfather's day it was reckoned well worth five thousand

dollars; and all it wants is improvement to make it even more valuable. Do you think I will leave this, and be a dependant on somebody's charity? Never! It is my patrimony, and I am resolved—"

A very decided rap on the door, which stood open, made me pause suddenly and look up. John Cleaveland stood on the broad flagstone, a faint shade of embarrassment on his usually cool face.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I had rapped twice before."

I felt my face grow hot, partly from the thought that he must have overheard our conversation, and partly from the peculiar look I saw in his eyes, as he let them rest a moment on my perturbed face. "He is doubtless speculating on my temper," I said to myself, savagely. I was also annoyed and irritated that he should have heard so much of our family affairs.

"I called, Miss Clifton, at the request of Mr. Appleton," he said, quietly. "You accept the situation, do you not?"

"I should not have gone through the farce of an application if I had not been ready to do so," I replied, quickly. I had not regained my composure, and could not divest myself of the impression that he was secretly amused at the fact.

"No, I know you would not," he said, in a sort of grave thoughtful way. "Well, now in regard to the salary. We have heretofore paid teachers in that department thirty-six dollars a month; this year we shall give forty, provided, of course, that you do not object," he added, with a quick glance at my eager face. But he did not smile, yet there was a look in his face that I did not understand, and which irritated me.

Indeed, I never felt at ease in this man's presence. I knew that I was constantly presenting my weakest and most unamiable side to him, and I was vexed at him for it. I wished that he would keep out of my sight, and that I had never seen him, and a score more of similar things. Of one thing I was positive: I disliked him utterly and entirely, and always should. I was a firm believer in first impressions, and had he not angered me at the outset? Tom Allen might laud him to the skies if he liked, I should detest him all the same.

"About the matter of transportation," he proceeded, in his easy nonchalant way, "as I presume you would like to board

with your family. The coach is too late for you; besides, it is often crowded, and goes over half the town, taking up passengers. I fancy your time will be too much taken up for mere *pleasure-riding*,"—and he smiled in an amused way;—"and so I have another plan to suggest, namely: Mr. Livingston, who lives on the hill yonder" (pointing across a sunny little interval, golden with cowslips, to a softly-rounded hill, whereon stood a charmingly old house, the walls of gray stone almost hidden by wandering vines, it was said, in summer-time), "is an attorney, having an office at the Centre. He goes up every morning about eight o'clock, and returns somewhere from four to six at night. I am of the opinion he would carry you at a trifling expense, if you have no better arrangement in view."

"Thank you," I said, more cordially than I had ever spoken to him before.

"O, it is not I, but our worthy chairman to whom you are indebted for this suggestion," he answered, carelessly.

"Indeed! I might have known—" I began, and stopped short in confusion.

"That it was not mine?" he said, laughing. "You doubtless think I should have proposed to take you myself."

"Only that you 'don't carry people for pay,'" I retorted.

His cool face flushed suddenly, and he turned half away. Then, raising his hat with ceremonious politeness, he said "good-evening," and walked leisurely away.

"What a magnificent-looking man your Mr. Cleaveland is!" Alice said, watching him as he went down the lane.

"My Mr. Cleaveland!" I exclaimed, indignantly. "I am sure I don't see what I have to do with him more than you. I think him the most disagreeable man I ever met."

Alice laughed softly, in such a provoking way!

"Dilly, my dear," my mother said, reprovingly, "I am afraid you were a little rude to Mr. Cleaveland. It is not at all like you to be irritable and ill-tempered. You remember Tom Allen praised him highly; and I should be sorry for you to be rude to a friend of his. Indeed, I should be sorry for my daughter to be rude to any one," she added, with a sort of gentle pride.

It was not at all like me to do so, but I did—I broke into a little hysterical fit of weeping; and then my mother put her arms about me, and kissed me and petted me in her sweet graceful fashion till I laughed, and declared myself “cured.” I believe I even went further, and made some excuse for my conduct, to the effect that I had been feeling so anxious about getting this school, and about her and Alice’s opposition to my plans, that I had got nervous, I supposed. But I carefully avoided any reference to John Cleaveland in any way.

I could not have taken a more politic course if I had studied a lifetime, though I did not think of it till afterward. My mother and Alice made no further objections to my plans; indeed, they went further, and developed a cordial interest in my prospective duties; and that evening went up and called on Mr. Livingston, in regard to the “transportation” business, my mother saying that it would be more proper for her to do so. It seemed so strange for her to be careful on my account—I, who for nearly a year now had had the full care and management of both family and financial affairs!

Mr. Livingston drove my mother and Alice home in his pretty basket-phaeton through the soft April dusk. I went out to the steps to meet them. He came forward and offered his hand, with such frank and open cordiality that I felt as much at ease as if I had known him all my life.

“I suppose we may as well be getting acquainted, Miss Clifton,” he said, laughingly, “since it has got to be done sooner or later. I only hope you will be as pleased with the arrangement your mother and myself have made as I am.”

“Then it is arranged, and you will take me?” I said, eagerly. “You are sure it is not going to inconvenience you too much, because—”

“Stop! Miss Clifton,” he interrupted, with a comical look of alarm, “there is to be no backing out on your part—haven’t you just given me your hand on it? As for the ‘inconvenience,’ you shall compensate me by gratuitous lessons on ‘parts of speech’ as we go along.”

“If you will promise to be a diligent pupil,” I answered, laughingly.

“Trust me for that!” he exclaimed,

gayly. “I make a ‘specialty,’ as horticulturists say, of that particular branch of science.”

He tarried some little time, talking in his easy cordial way, and making us all like him by the genial heartiness and friendliness of his manner.

“Well,” I said, after he had gone, “I think it’s worth while coming to Acton, if only to know Mr. Livingston.”

“And Mr. Cleaveland,” added Alice, demurely.

I did not deign to reply, but I felt the blood rush to my face, and felt hot, and angry, and uncomfortable, and wished the thought or mention of John Cleaveland might never intrude upon me again so long as I lived.

As April faded into May, and the new creation unfolded its wonderful marvel of life from death, I think we all felt as if we were under some mysterious spell of enchantment; everything was so strange, and new, and beautiful to us. How charming the old place grew under the magical fingers of the sunshine and the soft spring rain! How thick the willows grew with their delicate golden-green fringes, and how ridiculously swollen were the buds on every tree, and shrub, and bush! Under the front windows was a wide border where were all manner of old-fashioned flowers waking into life—lilies, pinks, daffodils, columbine, flower-de-luce, and a host beside, which were a constant subject for speculation to Harry and myself.

I was feeling altogether easy about Harry now. There was a lovely fresh color in his cheeks, and he had gained considerably both in flesh and strength. It is true, I was sometimes startled by that same peculiar cough which had been the herald of my father’s fatal illness, but it was at such rare intervals that I persuaded myself there was no real cause for uneasiness; and as neither mother nor Alice seemed to notice it, I tried to believe that my own morbid anxiety magnified the danger.

Tom Allen came out and stayed a few days, making arrangements for me about the farmwork, which was to be let on shares to a Mr. Gordon living in the neighborhood, and who had worked on the farm when a boy for my grandfather. This Gordon—Sam Gordon, his name was—believed in Willow-Brook Farm as religiously as he did in the catechism, and I was his

most devout disciple. Our enthusiasm, Mr. Livingston declared, was the "most simple and touching thing he had ever witnessed."

Mr. Livingston had fallen into the habit of dropping in upon us in the most neighborly and informal manner; and though I rode to the Centre with him each morning and returned with him, if he was through business in good season (otherwise I took the coach), still, the day seemed incomplete and unsatisfactory if he did not run in for a moment in the evening. I think we all grew to feel in this way—to expect him, and to feel disappointed if he did not come, though Alice pretended indifference, and ridiculed our "infatuation," as she called it.

It was the week before my summer vacation began;—how well I remember everything connected with that day, even to the peculiar oppressiveness of the thick languorous atmosphere which had hung like a leaden weight upon my spirits all day. It was precisely twenty-five minutes to three—I can see the exact position of the hands on the great dial-plate to this moment—when a low firm rap on the inner schoolroom door caused me to look hastily up. John Cleaveland was standing just outside, but came slowly forward when I looked up. The first feeling was one of vexation that he should come this, of all days—for I supposed he came, of course, to visit the school—when I was looking and feeling ill and worn out. But as he came toward me, something in the expression of his face changed the whole current of my feelings. There was in it such a look of infinite tenderness, pity and pain, that I cried out, involuntarily:

"O Mr. Cleaveland! what is it?"

He took my hands, which were cold and trembling, between his strong firm palms a moment, and placed me quietly in a seat. Then he told the scholars very briefly that Miss Clifton's mother had sent for her to come home, and they could be dismissed. I heard it all in a vague way, as one hears in a dream, and then I realized that we were alone. Something about that thought sent the blood—that had seemed congealing about my heart—to my face, and even to my finger-tips, with a fierce sudden bound that almost took my breath away.

"Is it about Harry?" I asked then, more quietly than I thought I could speak.

"Yes," he said, coming and standing by my chair. "But there is no cause for alarm now—at least there is no immediate peril. Harry has had an attack of hemorrhage, but is comfortable, and the doctor does not consider it very serious, *as yet*."

I did not faint, I did not cry out, but I think the agony in my heart stamped itself on my face, for my companion's grew strangely white as he turned and walked to the door, for an instant. I have a distinct remembrance of his bringing me my hat and shawl, and of his wrapping the latter about me carefully and tenderly, but I seemed somehow to have lost all care or thought of myself; I could think only of *him*—my bright handsome young brother, whom I loved better than my own life.

I do not remember that anything was said during the half hour we were driving to the farm. I could not talk, and my companion instinctively understood, and was silent. But as we came in sight of the house, he turned to me, and said, firmly:

"Miss Clifton, till you can command yourself, I shall consider it my duty to your brother to keep you away from Willow-Brook. There is helplessness and inefficiency enough there already."

"Mr. Cleaveland," I exclaimed, fiercely, "keep me away from my brother, if you dare!" And I half rose from the seat. He put out his hand and drew me down again, and for the first time, I think, in all our acquaintance, our eyes fairly met. Mine, I knew, were almost wild with pain, and grief, and anger, but his I could not understand. I felt the strength and power in them, however, and knew that he was master. His face was graver than I had ever seen it, and I thought sterner.

"I dare do what is right, Miss Clifton," he said, quietly; "and it is *not* right to add another element of weakness where calmness and courage are so imperatively demanded. O, why will you persist in misunderstanding me always?" he added, in a sharp intense voice.

"Pardon me," I said, gently. "I did not mean to be rude or unreasonable, but it came so suddenly—this blow to my dearest hopes—that it was not an easy thing to command myself. But I see the necessity of it—and you can trust me now?" I asked, humbly.

"Most implicitly!" he answered, with

such confident heartiness that it gave me new faith in my own strength.

I will not dwell on the need there was of some one to be brave, and calm, and efficient during those first few terrible days of grief and dread. My mother was utterly prostrated, physically and mentally, and I was forced to exclude her altogether from Harry's presence, as she could not—or did not—control either her speech or her emotions in the smallest degree; and excitement, in the critical state he was in, was simply murderous.

Alice, on the other hand, shrank from any contact with pain, or suffering, or care, constitutionally. I believe I have not mentioned that my sister was very beautiful, and very attractive, with a certain power or charm about her that some people call fascination. I had been proud of the beauty and grace of my younger sister all my life, and had rejoiced in her social successes; but we were so radically unlike in temperament, tastes and habits, that there was not that perfect sympathy between us which I would have liked. Alice was made for "*society*," while to me the whole thing was simply "*vanity and vexation of spirit*." With a nature that hungered for love and tenderness, I had a strong will, a sensitive independence, and a certain indomitableness that would not yield—to which difficulty was but another name for opportunity, and opposition the surest incentive to effort.

And so, being so differently constituted, I do not take it as any merit that I was able to do for Harry what Alice could not do. She liked sunshine and soft airs, luxury and ease, and, like certain flowers, only blossomed in the sunlight. I, on the contrary, needed the strengthening tonic of adverse winds to fully develop my capabilities and quicken my thoughts.

While Harry's condition was considered critical I do not think I knew what discouragement or fatigue meant. I would not yield to them—I must not, I knew, if I would save him, and that was the one absorbing thought and desire of my life. Everything else faded into a dim and vague insignificance before this one great wish of my heart. It was not till the great peril was lifted, and he was able to walk out, that my mind came back to other interests and hopes. I had realized through all the kindness and attention of Mr. Liv-

ingston, but as my heart grew lighter it also grew more grateful and tender toward him. I hardly know how I could have gone through those first few days had it not been for his thoughtful kindness in a score of ways. I was thinking it all over, and thinking particularly of something he had said to me that evening.

It had happened in this wise: I was suffering from a severe headache, and looked forlorn and wretched enough to excite any one's sympathy, I dare say. I was leaning against the window-sill as he came up to the house. I knew he had come to take Alice out for a drive; he had done it nearly every day since Harry had been ill, and I felt as grateful to him for this as for anything, for she had quite recovered her usual bright spirits and bright looks.

"My dear little girl," he said, laying his hand caressingly on my drooping head, "you have had a hard time of it, but you have been so brave! Do you know, little Dilly, that you are my exact ideal of a heroine?"

He had always been gentle, and in a certain way affectionate; it was in his nature to be; but he had never spoken to me like this before, and had never called me "Dilly." I felt ill and weak, and, like every other woman who is a real woman, felt a hungry longing for love and tenderness. I had never analyzed my feelings towards Ray Livingston; our relations had been so pleasant always that I had felt altogether content that they should continue unchanged. But his words suggested new thoughts and new possibilities, and I could not answer him with my old ease, and so was silent altogether. After a little pause he added, with more embarrassment than I had ever seen him manifest:

"You must not think of taking up that school business again. I have a right now to say this much."

Alice came out at this moment, and they went down the steps together. How beautiful she was! I thought I had never seen her look so lovely before, and as they rode slowly down through the green shadowed lane, the sunset light wrapping them in a warm bright glow, I felt a faint pang of bitterness stir in my heart. But it was only momentary, and my mind went back over Ray Livingston's words and tones, and I tried to understand my own heart, and could not. And, as if to confuse me

still more, I kept making little involuntary comparisons between him and John Cleaveland, which only vexed me, because I did not wish to think of Mr. Cleaveland at all.

It was one of those stirless summer nights when nature seems taking a siesta. Harry was in mother's room, and I stepped out softly, and went down through the dusk and the silence to a little rustic arbor under the willows. I had scarcely sat down when a quick firm step broke the stillness, and looking through the trees, I easily distinguished the form of John Cleaveland; indeed, I knew it was he, even before that, though I hardly can explain how I knew. I suppose he saw my light dress, for he came to the edge of the path, and asked if he might venture into the "new garden of Eden."

"I came up about the school," he said, coming and leaning against one of the trees. "The vacation will end in two weeks, and a teacher must be provided. I had—I mean we had heard nothing from you personally, though Mr. Livingston has informed us that you will not teach longer. I do not question his authority,"—he said this very icily—"but choose, nevertheless, your personal confirmation."

"I shall not teach if you do not want me, of course," I said, feeling grieved and angry, and altogether wretched.

"Want you!" he exclaimed, sharply. "Have I ever given you cause to say this to me, Miss Clifton?"

I knew that he had not, and I was ashamed and sorry, for it came to me all at once, his kindness and helpfulness—the exact help I needed—at a time when I had needed it so sorely. What could he think of me, save to pity or despise me?

The quick light whirr of carriage wheels broke a silence that was becoming unbearable. I drew a breath of relief as I saw Mr. Livingston and Alice riding up the lane. They came into a slow walk as they neared us, and, all unconscious of our proximity, they continued their conversation.

"There is no reason for a day's delay," he was saying, very earnestly. "I can help you then as I cannot now. It will be easier, financially, for your family, and I will be a faithful son and brother to them all, for your sake, my darling! I am going to ask Dilly, who is always sensible and

prompt, to help me convince you," he said, with a soft laugh.

I do not think I ever came so near what people call "hysterics," before or since, as I did then. My physical and nervous system were overwrought, and the sudden discovery of the cause of all Mr. Livingston's friendship to our family made me for an instant giddy and faint with pain. And I had been weak enough only two hours before to fancy he cared for me! "As if any one could do that in his senses" I said, bitterly, to myself, feeling my own lack of beauty, and grace, and accomplishments as I had never felt it before. And he saw it all—all my pain and humiliation, and was pitying me. He, of all men in the world! It seemed for a moment as if I should go wild. I think it was the look of pain and pity in my companion's face that restored me to my senses. It roused my pride, for I knew he thought my emotion wholly caused by this chance discovery of Mr. Livingston's love for my sister, and that he had in some way deceived me, and won my love only to cast it heartlessly aside. And I—I could not explain an affair like this to make any one understand—and to him! Well, he might think what he chose; why should I care what he might believe? And yet I did care, in spite of my will or reason; and as I went over the whole subject again and again, this troubled me most sorely of all.

The next day Mr. Livingston came over very early, and in his frank easy way told his story, and asked for the family sanction. Of course it was granted, for had he not seemed like one of us always? And when I thought of it more, the only wonder I felt was that I had not foreseen it from the outset. And if I had any vague regret or sense of loss at first, it faded quietly out in the genial air of tender brotherly interest and affection he continually manifested toward me.

It was a very quiet affair—my sister's marriage—and not at all to her taste; but Harry was so delicate, none of us was willing for her to go away. And so she went quietly to her husband's house, and I prepared to take up my school duties again, though Ray strongly protested against it, and got almost angry at my "stubbornness," as he called it.

It was the early part of the last week of the vacation. I was getting restless and

uneasy, and longed for the commencement to come. I wanted to get my mind off myself a little, for, disguise it as I might, I knew I was nervous, or morbid, or something which made me unlike my former self. I was thinking it all over, and wondering if I should ever again feel quite as strong and hopeful as I had felt last spring. It seemed such a very long time ago that I came to Willow-Brook!

"Dilly dear, are you there?" came suddenly, in a strange stifled whisper from Harry's room.

I sprang to my feet instantly; I knew so well what it meant; I had heard that strange gurgling whisper once before—could I ever mistake or forget its terrible import?

I cannot, even now, dwell on that dreadful time, bringing back as it did so vividly my father's last hours, without something of the fierce anguish I suffered at that time.

"Dilly," he whispered, clinging to my hand, "it is very hard to leave you—I love you so! And the world is so beautiful," his eyes turning wistfully toward the open window where the sunshine lay in a yellow flood, "and I am so young!"

I heard a quiet step in the room, and looking up, saw John Cleaveland close beside me. I put out my hand, and he clasped it in silence. A faint smile trembled across Harry's face, and he whispered, softly:

"It is all right, Dilly. I am—going—home." His voice and breath going out together, and only the smile remaining.

Ray and Alice came to the farm for a while, it was so lonely. Ray said it was "no use to think of my school any more, there was no need of it, and it was my duty to stay at home." Duty! Yes, it was always that for me. I wondered, in a vague way, if, by any possibility, I owed any duty to myself.

Mr. Cleaveland came in the first of the week to say that the school would wait a week or two for me, if I felt as if I could go on.

"Cleaveland," Mr. Livingston exclaimed, quite warmly, "why do you haunt Dilly with your paltry school? Have you no consideration at all for her?"

John Cleaveland's calm face flushed suddenly, and then grew very white.

"I think Miss Clifton *needs* to do this,

Mr. Livingston," he said, firmly; "yet she shall choose for herself. What do you say?" he asked, turning abruptly to me.

"If I could consult my own personal wishes, I should certainly go on with the school," I said, quickly. "But if it is my duty to give it up, that decides the matter."

"We shall depend on you to teach the school, Miss Clifton," he replied, in a tone of quiet decision. "The vacation will be extended two weeks." And bowing quietly and coolly, he withdrew.

"Really, this interference is unwarrantable," Ray declared, indignantly. "I do not wonder you dislike him, Dilly."

"I used to think he was a gentleman," my mother said, in an aggrieved way, "but he has no regard for my feelings at all—he doesn't seem to even think of me."

"It does seem odd that one should think of my needing any change of scene or diversion of thought," I said.

"There! that is just like Dilly!" Alice exclaimed. "If we say three words more against John Cleaveland, she will be irrevocably in love with him."

I felt my face grow hot, and not caring for them to see, I ran up to my room. I could hide it from others—that my pride helped me to do—but I could no longer hide it from myself. I did love John Cleaveland, and against my will, my reason, and my determination! I had tried my best to hate him—I really believed at one time that I did hate him—and this was the end! And I had always held such very high notions about this matter. No woman of sense or delicacy would ever give her love unsought, I had maintained. And this was the end of that also.

I went up in the coach quite frequently after the fall term began, and sometimes I walked home. Alice liked to drive in with Mr. Livingston, and when his business admitted it, they rode about the outlying country, often returning home by quite another route. On one of these occasions I had missed the coach, and there was no other way but to walk. It was one of those gray dreary autumnal days so common in November. It had been thickening all day, and the wind was raw and damp, with an occasional sprinkle of rain. I was unusually tired, and, though I made all the haste I could, I had got but little more than half way home when the storm broke with sudden fierceness. I looked

about me despairingly. There was no house near, and the wind and rain made locomotion almost impossible. To my infinite relief I saw a close carriage approaching. I resolved to appeal to his humanity, whoever he might be, to turn about and take me home. But I had no need; for the carriage stopped, a man sprang out, lifted me in his arms, and put me in the carriage, before I had fairly got breath.

"O Mr. Cleaveland!" I exclaimed, with a little hysterical sob, "I am so glad!"

"Are you?" he asked, looking down in my face. "Then I am. I was not sure you would ride with me when I found you."

"But did you come to find me?—how did you know that I—"

"How did I know?" he interrupted. "As if I had not thought of you all this dismal afternoon, and watched for you in vain when the coach came in! I waited as long as I could endure it, and then started to find you. I saw Livingston and your sister come home soon after dinner." I knew he was looking at me sharply when he said this, and I knew of what he was thinking, and it irritated me.

"Mr. Cleaveland," I said, hastily, "I would like to correct an impression you have somehow got. It—it is about Ray." I hardly knew how to go on, now that I had begun.

"Well, what about him?" he asked, not moving his eyes from my face.

"You think I was in love with him, and that he jilted me for my sister, because she was more beautiful and attractive; and you feel a sort of lofty pity for my forlorn condition. I dare say that is why you came after me to-day."

His face grew suddenly white and stern.

"I wish to Heaven it was!" he exclaimed, bitterly, "since I am so utterly unbearable to you."

I knew he would think me weak and silly, but if my life had depended, I could not have helped it. I broke down and cried as if my heart would break.

He put his arm about me, and drew me to him in a sort of fierce clasp.

"Why will you persist in misunder-

standing me, Dilly Clifton?" he exclaimed, passionately. "I, who would give my life to save you an instant of pain or sorrow! I know you don't want to hear it," he went on, in a rapid intense voice, "but I must tell you now—you have made me do it in very self-defence! You remember the night I brought you to Willow-Brook? Well, ever since that night I have struggled to overcome my love for you, because I saw how strongly you disliked me. I have resolved scores of times never to trouble you with a presence so distasteful to you, and yet, understanding your peculiar nature well enough to see the kind of help you have needed at certain times, I could not refrain from giving it, though I believe I almost always have angered you in so doing."

"But it was because I thought you pitied my weakness, or despised me for my temper," I interrupted. "I could not bear your contempt with indifference."

"Dilly!"—and he bent his face close to mine—"why did you care? Tell me!"

"I shall not!" I exclaimed, struggling to get free.

"But you shall!—and now, this very moment! Do you think I am going to be put off by any sort of a subterfuge? I am too much in earnest for dallying."

And, as it had been from the first, so it was now. I yielded, and he got his answer; an answer that I was as glad to give as he to receive, perhaps, after all.

"It is just the thing I intended," Tom Allen said, complacently, when he came out to our wedding at New Year's. "John Cleaveland is the only man I ever knew who I thought could manage Dilly," he said, laughingly, to my mother; "or whom I thought to be worthy of her," he added, in an undertone, to me. He always had a foolish partiality for me—perhaps because I loved the dear honest fellow so warmly and thoroughly.

Willow-Brook Farm is, John and I think, the dearest and brightest place on the globe; and no day goes by but in my happy heart I bless the memory of him who so thoughtfully, and, I think, providentially, left me this dear old homestead for MY PATRIMONY.

## MY THANKSGIVING.

BY MRS. R. B. EDSON.

I *HAD* just finished a charming rose-colored thibet morning-dress. It was faced with white watered silk, and was embroidered in applique, with white velvet and white silk cord. A light wreath of convolvulus ran round the skirt, and up the front. I stood holding it up and admiring it. Somehow, I felt almost sorry it was done, as much as I needed the pay for making it. But it was so beautiful, and I so loved to make beautiful things! I doubt if the delicate bride, for whom it was intended ever felt one tithe of the exquisite joy in its possession, that I did, as the beautiful design developed itself under my patient fingers. I have an intense passion for beautiful things I cannot remember the time when I did not go into ecstasies over the simple and beautiful blossoms that open their fragrant leaves in the spring sunshine. They are to me royal apostles, with the odor of sanctity on their beautiful garments. I love to make friends of them—and they are the most companionable of friends. I love to read his care in the lilies of the field, and, were I a Catholic, I would string them for a rosary.

I very early developed a tact for adaptation and combination of color, and this natural aptitude in after years stood between me and despair. In the dark days of my early orphanage, it came and ministered unto me. I had nothing else upon which to lean, but it stood me bravely in my need. And so I became in a measure independent even in my poverty. People praised my "taste," and through it I came at once into successful competition with old and well-established dressmakers. But it was in embroidery and in fancy work that my forte lay, and I *had*, therefore, been selected by Miss Everleigh to superintend the making of her bridal trousseau.

Grace Everleigh was the only daughter of Ross Everleigh, one of the wealthiest, if not the wealthiest man in the country. There was no end to the "houses and lands" which this man possessed, to say nothing of mining shares, bank stock, etc. Of course the trousseau was magnificent, and the envy of the entire feminine portion of the community.

It was the week before Thanksgiving, and the wedding was to come off in great style in church. I thought, as I finished this, the last, and to my fancy the most beautiful dress in the bridal wardrobe, how many poor homes it would have made glad, if its cost had been expended in such homely articles as meat, meal and potatoes. I thought of it all the way home, and, once, I paused under a lamp-post and counted the contents of my portemonnaie; by the way, a very careless proceeding on my part, although no harm came of it in this particular instance, yet, I would not advise others to go and do likewise.

There were twenty-two dollars in bills, and a small trifle in change. I owed six dollars of this for the rent of my chamber. I had always kept a home, it being so much pleasanter, and, perhaps, quite as economical. It had a south and west window. From the south I enjoyed a bird's-eye view of a confused mass of roofs, chimneys and awnings, with here and there glimpses of the bustling crowded streets. The west window commanded a magnificent rear view of a tannery; and the horns and hoofs daily displayed there brought forcibly to my remembrance the very impressive nursery tales, in which a certain pair of "hoofs and horns" were made to play an important part. Nevertheless, I loved this same west window. From it I caught beautiful glimpses of wood and sky, glimpses that transported me far away from the dust and turmoil of the city, to the cool green aisles of nature's vast cathedral. I caught the scent of ferns and violets in April, and heard the solemn dropping of the autumn rain on the dead leaves in November. Perhaps, it was much of it fancy, perhaps all; but I have paused more than once, with the sudden drumming of the partridge in my ears, and the shrill whistle of the quail coming through the brake. In addition to this, I saw from it all the gorgeous panoply of sunset clouds. I revelled in their beauty, and grew entranced by the exquisite delicacy of their faint outlines, as they faded into the dusky gray of evening. I never gradded the six dollars a month I paid for my little attic

home, though, sometimes, I hardly knew where the money was coming from to pay for it; but the way, however dark, had always opened before me, and my faith in the future was strong and cheerful.

But, as I said, I owed six of that twenty-two dollars for rent, and five to Dr. Lavator for attendance several months before, and which I had not been able to quite pay up yet. A long nervous fever had fastened itself upon me, in the spring, and I had hardly recovered from its effects, peculiarly, yet. I had but eleven dollars left, and I needed thrice that amount in clothing for the winter, to say nothing of fire, light and food. I had no more work engaged, just then, and it would not do to let all go. I turned over that eleven dollars in my mind, more than a hundred times before I reached the head of B— Street, where I lived. A three story wooden tenement house stood just on the corner. I glanced up at the windows of a room in the second story; a little wan childish face was pressed against the pane, and a pair of great solemn-looking black eyes peered out into the dimly-lighted street. My heart smote me for my selfishness, for I had been hoping I should not see him, with his pitiful pleading face.

I walked nearly the length of the block, looking resolutely away from that window. "One must be charitable to one's self," I said, thinking of my wet feet, and the thin waterproof which was no sort of proof against the cold wind that whirled and shrieked through the streets, the avant-courier of the pitiless winter. But those wistful eyes haunted me still. I could not escape them, look which way I would. Suddenly I turned, and retracing my steps I pushed open the door and ran quickly up a long flight of dark narrow stairs. But I did not stumble, I had been there too many times. "I can better go without a new cloak than he without his supper," I said, as I paused a moment on the landing to take breath. But he had heard me, and opened the door, exclaiming, a soft flush mantling the white transparent face:

"O auntie! I thought you never *would* come. I've watched, O so long! I thought once I saw you go by—only I knew you wouldn't go by."

I stooped and gathered him in my arms—dear little fellow—how light he was! asking God to forgive me for my unworthiness of so perfect a faith.

"How did you know it was I, Bertie?" I said, carrying him across the room in my arms, to the little cot whereon his mother lay.

"We haven't so many friends, have we, darling?" she said, as she reached out her thin hand in greeting, "as to be in danger of making mistakes."

"No," he said, shaking his head, gravely; "nobody but you—only," correcting himself, "only God."

"Do you feel any better, Mrs. Prescott?" I asked, of the pale little figure, propped up against the pillows.

"Yes, I think so; at least, I suppose I am better, for I am hungry," she said, smiling, O such a wan pitiful smile!

I knew so well of what she was thinking, and my heart ached for her, but I answered, quickly:

"I am so glad, for now you will get well enough to eat my Thanksgiving dinner with me."

"I don't know about that," she said, smiling more brightly. "Let me see, when is it?"

"In just one week from to-day."

"Only a week! I fear I—"

"I don't fear anything about it. A great deal may happen in a week," I said, little thinking how prophetic my words were.

Then I made an excuse to go down, to close the door, and slipped across the street into a grocery, and bought tea, sugar, crackers and butter. Then I went into a restaurant, and got some oysters, milk and two brick loaves of bread. My hands were quite full, and the restaurant man said, as he opened the door for me:

"Have you far to go, miss?"

"Only across the street," I replied, nodding toward the house. "A woman and child are starving there—that is all."

"Who are they, Miss Malvern?"

The man knew me from seeing me pass daily.

"A Mrs. Prescott, sir."

"But *who* are they—I mean are they *anybody*?"

"Only God's poor, sir; that is all."

"Stop!" he called after me.

I turned, and he came toward me with half-a-dozen oranges, and a sheet of nice golden sponge cake.

"I am not quite a brute, Miss Malvern," he said, kindly, as he piled them in my arms. "There are so many you know, yourself,

Miss Malvern, that are unworthy of help or sympathy from honest people, that one is apt to get suspicious."

"Yes, I know," I said. And thanking him, in Mrs. Prescott's name, for the cake and oranges, I hurried away.

"O mamma!" exclaimed Bertie, as I unfolded my packages upon the table, "isn't this just like a fairy tale, with Aunt Aggie for the good geni?"

"Your good geni is a fat bald-headed saloon-keeper, Bertie—alas for the romance!" I said, laughing.

"You did not ask him for these, Miss Malvern?" a quick flush staining the pallid cheek.

"No, my dear, he sent them voluntarily, because you were ill."

"I am glad. I cannot quite bring myself to that, yet."

Then laying aside my water-proof, which, by the way, had grown so really thick and warm, that I had no doubt but it would do nicely all winter, I proceeded to get supper. I set out the little deal table, and put on one of Mrs. Prescott's pretty snowdrop table covers, the remnant of better days, and then I made tea, toast, and a little tureen of oyster soup, and cut up some of the sponge cake and bread; and then I found a glass dish into which I put the oranges, and set them in the centre of the table to make it look nice. Then Bertie took hold, and we set it up before the bed, and we sat on the other side. I have sat at some royally-spread boards since then, for that was a year ago, but I have never eaten so happy a meal, or seen one that looked so beautiful to me as that.

After the supper was over, Bertie crept into my arms, and fixing his great black eyes on my face, asked, gravely, "If I was very rich?"

I laughed; but Mrs. Prescott said:

"Dear Agatha, I know just what this cost you, the struggle and self-denial; I know, also, that God will reward you fourfold. I will not thank you, I will pray for you—pray that every penny you have denied your own necessities to relieve ours, may be returned to you a thousand fold in kind, besides the unspeakable riches of his grace without measure."

The next day I paid my landlord and my physician, and had seven dollars left. I had a number of errands to do about town that day, and it was late in the afternoon before

I got home. I was weary, and it was not often that I got leisure to rest in the day time, so I locked my door and laid down, not thinking of sleeping. I did, however, and did not awake until it was quite dark. I arose quickly and looked out; it was raining, and the wind was blowing hard. I was intending to go over and see how Mrs. Prescott was, but the night was so wild, I concluded to defer it till morning. I sat thinking over the misfortunes that had crowded her life so full of sorrow.

It was a little over three months since I had first known her. I first went there to get a dress finished for a lady who "couldn't wait;" there are a great many such. I had heard that she was a widow, and poor, and wanted work, so I sought her out; and, as I liked not only the work, but the worker, I gave her all I had to spare. Her history was that of hundreds of others. They had been in comfortable circumstances at the commencement of the war. They had a nice little home, and were happy in a quiet way. But the terrible demon of war walked into their beautiful Eden, and sorrow and desolation followed. After nearly three years of marching and fighting, on his part, and the agony of watching and waiting on hers, it all ended in one short telegraph, "Mortally wounded, private Harry Prescott."

A long illness had followed this terrible blow, and her little savings had vanished like dew. She was among strangers; indeed, her husband was an Englishman by birth, and had no relations in this country. She had one brother, Cecil Burnham, but she had not seen or heard from him since the breaking out of the war. He had sailed for the East Indies, the autumn before the never-to-be-forgotten spring of '61. She had come to believe him dead, as the years went by and brought no tidings of him. She had left the country, where she had lived in the days of her happiness—the familiar scenes she had enjoyed with him grew so painful to her—and come into the city for the double purpose of getting better employment, and forgetting self in the great press, and bustle, and struggle of other lives. But ill health prevented her doing much, and a long illness had reduced her to absolute want. It is true, she had the small pittance allowed her by government, but what was that to relieve the necessities of illness, and provide food and shelter both for herself and her child?

She was a delicately-nurtured, fragile sort of a woman, one of the sort to be petted and cared for, and illy calculated to battle with life in its dusty arena. I felt a sort of protecting fondness for the little dependent creature, from the first, and our acquaintance ripened into a warm and earnest friendship. Bertie and I were also fast friends. He was a dear wise little fellow, and I saw with pain that he pined daily in the ungenial city air, and the continual pressure of want and care. It did not need the gift of second sight to foretell his fate, if things went on in this way long. The thin white face and great solemn eyes made my heart ache to behold.

I sat a long while in the dark thinking of them, and trying to devise plans to assist them, and I fell asleep thinking of them, and dreamed that they had been abducted by the bald-headed saloon-keeper, and concealed in a cave, in the mountains of the moon, toward which I was perpetually trying to climb by rainbow-ladders, whose prismatic rounds continually eluded my grasp. The dream was very vivid, and I awoke with a feeling of disappointment and loss. As soon as convenient after breakfast, I prepared to go out. As I came in sight of Mrs. Prescott's windows, I was startled to see them both open. A sudden fear overcame me—what if she were dead! It was a raw gusty morning, but it was not *its* chilliness that struck so to my heart.

I went hurriedly in; the door of one of the lower rooms stood open a little, and four or five ragged children, with little blue pinched faces, peered curiously out. I ran swiftly up the stairs, a feeling of desolation coming over me, as the chill wind from the open windows blew in my face. The room was empty and deserted. I cried out in sudden surprise, but only the hollow sepulchral echo of my own voice replied. It was so strange! and instinctively I thought of my dream, half believing in my amazement that it was true. I turned to go down, when a woman at the foot of the stairs said, interrogatively:

"Miss Agatha Malvern?"

"Yes," I said, eagerly; for I had caught sight of a slip of paper in her hand.

"Mrs. Prescott was moved away yesterday, and she left this note to be given you when you called, as she was sure you would," the woman said, handing me the paper with one hand, and holding the hands

of two children with the other, while two more were hiding their blue pinched faces in the folds of her skirts.

I took the note in a dazed bewildered sort of a way, looking, probably, very much as I felt, for she drew back the children, and said, as she stepped backward into the room:

"Sit down a moment, miss." And she placed a chair before the stove, after carefully dusting it with her apron.

The children were huddled in a corner rolling their little red hands in their aprons, and looking at me askance.

I tore open the note and read:

"MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—A sudden and unexpected event takes me away from here immediately; but I cannot go without thanking you for all you have done for me, and once more invoking God's blessing upon all your future life. I shall see you again ere long. Your affectionate friend,

ALICE PRESCOTT."

It was vague and unsatisfactory, leaving me in a maze of perplexity and doubt. Suddenly it occurred to me to question the woman before me; she could tell me *how* she went, at least.

"Mrs. Prescott went very suddenly," I said. "I thought she was too ill to be moved."

"O miss, you should have seen how she picked up after he come. She actually walked down stairs, and got into the coach, herself, though he insisted upon carrying her."

"He?" I interrupted. "Then a gentleman came for her?"

"You may well say that, miss; for, if ever I saw a gentleman, he was one. I didn't ask any questions, but it's my opinion that it's her husband come back alive, after all. I heard her shriek out that night, and then cry, and then laugh; and—"

"What night?" I asked, in thorough bewilderment.

"Why, that night after you were here—Thursday night, wasn't it?"

"Did he come *that* night?"

"Yes; not five minutes after I heard you come down stairs. I remember, because I thought you had returned for something."

"It is very strange," I said, rising to go. "Did you mind what sort of a looking man this was—was he large, or slight; dark, or fair?"

"O yes indeed, miss; one couldn't help noticing him, he was such a grand imperial-looking man. He was rather dark, with heavy black hair, and magnificent beard. But his eyes were the most wonderful. You know Bertie had rare strange eyes, that bewildered one to look at—well, this man's eyes were like his, only more beautiful. I should have thought, miss," she said, hesitatingly, "she would have told you in the letter, if it was her husband, seeing you were her friend."

I thought so, too, but I only thanked her, and bade her good-morning, and went back to my rooms, feeling, I must confess, somewhat injured at the lack of confidence. Fortunately, I found a package of work awaiting me, which served in a degree to divert my mind.

A friend of Miss Everleigh's had been so much pleased with her morning-dress that she had ordered one like it at once. It must be done before Thanksgiving morning, as she was going out of town. I went quickly to work, for it would be close work to finish it, even by sitting up late at night. I experienced a thrill of delight as I gathered the material in my hands; letting it fall through them in soft rich folds. A sudden yearning came over me for just such rich and beautiful things. Why should I, who loved beauty so intensely, be shut out from its enjoyment, my life hedged about with the coarseness and loneliness of poverty? And this Thanksgiving festival, so full of joyful promise, and bright anticipation to others, what was it to me? What had I to be thankful for? No dear home-circle awaited my coming, no loving lips whispered my name with tender longing. I was so alone. I could have borne the want, and care, and toil, so much easier, with some one to love me. I did not often give way to such feelings. I was naturally of a brave and hopeful spirit, and with a mighty effort I drove back these rebellious feelings, and became myself once more. I found very much to be thankful for, after all, and a great many sweet and beautiful things to enjoy. And so I went about my work with a glad and grateful heart.

Very early Tuesday morning the penny post brought me a letter. It was quite an event to me. I did not often have letters. It bore the postmark of the town where Mrs. Prescott had lived previous to her removal to the city. It was directed in a bold hand, unmistakably a gentleman's, but, upon open-

ing it, I found it to be as I had at first supposed, from Mrs. Prescott. It was very brief, and as follows:

"DEAR AGATHA,—Do not forget that we are to dine together on Thanksgiving Day. I am still rather too much of an invalid to come to you, therefore, *you* will have to come to me. The morning train for this place leaves your city at eight o'clock. You will not disappoint us—you *must* not. Bertie will meet you at the depot; he is wild to see you, and is by no means alone in his impatience. Good-by until Thursday.

A. P."

I shouldn't be willing to say, positively, but I have an impression that I acted very foolish over that letter. But I do know that I kissed it over and over again, and put it in my bosom, where it set my heart to beating—O, such a happy, happy tune! How my fingers flew! it seemed as if they were winged. The world blossomed into sudden beauty; I looked out, thinking what a lovely day it was, and was dreadfully disgusted to hear a man down in the tannery say to another, in a gruff voice:

"What a gray dismal day it is!"

To which the other replied:

"Wretched! It's enough to give a saint the blues."

The "blues!" Why, the man must be a perfect hypochondriac, to think of the blues in a day like this. Why, it was perfectly enchanting! Suppose the wind did blow a trifle, and there were a few clouds in the sky, it was a delightful day for a' that.

Now, I do not believe any woman—a *real* woman—ever received an invitation to go anywhere, but her first thought was what she should "wear." I have no reason to believe I am exempt from the common weakness. I confess a violet cashmere, a pearl-gray hat, and a new black cloak danced in delightful confusion through my brain. Yes, thanks to Miss Everleigh's friend, I *could* have a new cloak.

I do not imagine that I slept very much that night. I wouldn't have believed I slept at all, only I dreamt of flying through space on the back of a magnificent comet, whose long streaming nebula was made up of violet cashmere, pink thibet and white velvet, superbly spotted with soft, liquid, bewildering black eyes, very much after the style of peacocks' tails.

Thanksgiving morning came at last; it snowed a little, perhaps you remember; but I always had a weakness for snowstorms, they cover up the still dead face of nature with such a tender hand; and this one, especially, came down so soft and still; I fancied it an angelic benediction falling upon the graves of the dead flowers. What a cheerful crowd there was that morning at the depot and in the cars! What groups of happy children, and no less happy elders, were "going home to Thanksgiving!"

It was fifteen miles to W—, my destination; and all along the route we were constantly leaving or taking up little parties of eager happy people. The first thing I saw when we came puffing and panting up to the W— station was the great expectant eyes of Bertie, fixed intently on the cars. He was sitting in a handsome carriage, and a tall dark-bearded man held the fiery horse by the bit. I stepped to the platform and walked back a few steps. A glad cry greeted me, and Bertie, springing from the carriage, with, "O Aunt Aggie!" was in my arms, and clinging to me in a paroxysm of joy. Presently, with grave thoughtfulness, he said, slipping to his feet, and taking my hand:

"This is Miss Malvern, my dear mamma's friend."

My hand was held a moment in a firm warm clasp, and a pair of dark eloquent eyes looked down in my face.

"I am very glad to meet you, Miss Malvern," he said, lifting me into the carriage.

It was certainly very awkward, Bertie's introduction had been altogether such a one-sided affair. I was in perfect ignorance as to who the gentleman was, but I expected, of course, it must be Harry Prescott. Bertie resembled him enough to enable me to guess that; besides, it explained something of the mystery. Mrs. Prescott had evidently been planning a nice little surprise for me. I determined to forestall her, so I said, with easy assurance:

"Your coming must have been a great surprise to your family."

"Yes," he said, quietly. "Alice had about given up ever seeing me again, I believe."

"She certainly had the best of evidence for, believing you dead; one of your comrades told her the story himself. How did your wife bear it?"

An amused smile flashed over his face as he replied:

"I have never had the happiness of seeing that lady yet. I hope she will bear it with becoming fortitude when I do."

"O auntie!" exclaimed Bertie, the perplexity in his face suddenly lighting up, "this isn't papa; he was killed at Fair Oaks, you know. *This* is Uncle Cecil."

I looked at him in sudden surprise. I had not even thought of this. The impression had been so strong upon me that it was Harry Prescott, that I had not thought of the possibility of its being her brother.

"You look disappointed, Miss Malvern," he said, looking smilingly at my blank face.

"But I never thought of *you*."

"Plenty of time to repair that fault."

"By thinking of you *now*, I suppose you mean? Well, I don't see as I can help it."

"Don't try to, Miss Malvern; I will promise not to complain."

"I—I don't mean—" I stammered, in confusion.

"Of course you don't. Ah! here we are home, Bertie."

I looked out. A charming cottage, with broad smooth lawns, and evident traces of flowers in the bare brown shrubbery, met my surprised vision. Alice Prescott was standing in the door to welcome me, a soft flush on her cheek, and the light of returning health and happiness in her eyes. She folded me silently in her arms, and I was conscious of some very blissful emotions in that moment we stood there.

"Come here, Cecil."

He came and stood beside her.

"Cecil, this is my best and dearest friend. I have told you what she has been to me, how she has denied herself food and clothing to help me, and—"

"Please don't!" I said, feeling terribly embarrassed. "You were weak and ill, and you imagined a great deal."

"But not all," he said, looking at me out of those wonderful eyes. "Shall I tell you what I imagined one night, Miss Malvern?"

I murmured some sort of an indistinct answer.

"I imagined I saw an angel in a small dimly-lighted chamber in a certain city. She nursed the sick, comforted the fatherless, fed them out of her own scanty earnings, and looked so radiantly happy at her task, that I was positive that it was really

an angel; but my little sister here insists that she knows who it was. Do you believe she does?"

"O Agatha," interrupted Mrs. Prescott, "don't you think! Cecil was over in that restaurant all the while. He had come to the city to look for me—indeed, he had looked two whole days. By chance he was in the saloon when you came in. He was immediately interested, he says," glancing archly at him. A slight flush crept into the bronzed face.

"Don't, Alice! I want the happiness of telling Miss Malvern *that* myself."

"Don't interrupt me; where was I? Oh he was interested, and followed the saloon-keeper to the door. Then he heard you tell my name. His first impulse was to follow you, but he restrained himself, and came out upon the sidewalk and watched us at our meal. He said he could not destroy the beautiful picture, and so waited until you had gone."

"But why were you so secret in your movements? I was so shocked by the suddenness and mysteriousness of your departure that I have hardly recovered from it yet," I said, smilingly.

"Ah! that was Cecil's work. After I had told him all about you he planned this surprise. Is it a pleasant one, dear?"

I suppose I was very foolish, but I could not keep back the tears when Bertie climbed in my lap and whispered:

"Auntie, I cried myself to sleep that first night here, because I could never watch for you to go by any more."

Then, as I went over the prettily-furnished rooms with her, Mrs. Prescott told me how he had done everything, planned everything, and had it all ready for her reception before he came to search for her. He had been very fortunate, and had brought home enough to make them all independent.

"I hope you will like Cecil, he is so good and thoughtful for our comfort," she said, with fond gentleness.

That night, as we sat in the dusky gloaming, Mrs. Prescott said, softly:

"I never expected to be so happy again; this has been a golden day."

"I shall live on it all winter," I said. "I shall shut my eyes and fancy we are sitting together, as we do now."

"Uncle Cecil," suddenly interrupted Bertie, lifting his head from my lap, where he

had been lying as if asleep, "why need Aunt Aggie go back at all?"

"She isn't going," he said, very decidedly.

"O, if you only would stay here this winter, Agatha!" Mrs. Prescott exclaimed, joyfully.

"I cannot, my dear friend. But we will not talk of that now. I will stay until Saturday, and then I must go back to my engagements."

"I wish you would stay, Agatha," Mrs. Prescott said.

"Please do, Aunt Aggie," Bertie pleaded, as he bade me good-night, and went out with his mother, who was waiting to put him to bed.

"I like *that*, Miss Malvern," Cecil said, coming and standing at the back of my chair, and leaning over so as to look in my face.

"Like what?"

"What Bertie calls you."

"Ah? then, perhaps, you would consider it an especial favor if I allowed you to call me so."

"No, thank you; I mean I like it for *him*! There is another title that I prefer calling you by." And, stooping suddenly, he whispered a word in my ear that sent the blood surging to my face, but I tried to speak indifferently.

"I think you are mistaken. You forget you never saw me until this morning."

"No; it is you who are mistaken. I have seen you, all my life, my ideal only became real to-day. Why, darling," lifting my face so that he could look into my eyes, "I have seen your face continually in the delicious Indian gloaming and midday siestas for the last five years. It is fate, you see; you might as well submissively yield."

"But I am not a fatalist."

"Then I shall make it the first business of my life to convert you."

A bearded lip suddenly brushed my cheek. Alice's hand was on the knob.

"You use novel arguments to make proselytes," I said, feeling as if I ought to be angry, and half vexed with myself that I was not.

"Perhaps, but I like them, nevertheless," sauntering toward the window.

"Like what, Cecil?" queried Alice, coming just in time to hear this last sentence.

"Twilight," he answered, nonchalantly.

"By the way, have I ever told you about

those wonderful East Indian twilights?"

"No; tell us about them."

And so we sat in the dusk and listened to descriptions that sounded strange to our New England ears.

When I left to go back to the city, Saturday morning, Bertie whispered very privately in my ear:

"Uncle Cecil says he is going to bring you back to-night—is he?"

Cecil came in at that moment, and I was so vexed at my confusion that I fear I must have appeared dreadfully awkward. He had business in the city, he said; an assertion you will not be inclined to doubt when I tell you that he did bring me back to W—— that night! and that I came very gladly and willingly, though I *did* think

it was altogether too quick; but Cecil said "we could repent at leisure!"

But we never have; we have only been growing happier and happier all through this sweet swift year.

Bertie has grown plump and rosy, and the grave solemn look has left his eyes—those glorious eyes, the most beautiful, with one exception, that I ever saw. He is in great trouble just now, because he is to leave me; for just the queerest thing has happened; or, rather, is going to happen *this* Thanksgiving Eve. It is a great secret, though, and, as it has been maliciously asserted that a woman cannot keep a secret, therefore I shall not tell you—though I'm dying to—, that Alice is going to be married to that bald-headed restaurant man!